

Israel on security alert for Passover

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel prepared to begin the Jewish Passover holiday Friday with its security forces on special alert for possible Islamist attacks to avenge the death of Hamas bomb-maker Mohieddin Sharif.

Hundreds of extra soldiers and police were deployed in Israeli cities, Jewish settlements and popular tourist spots, notably those in the West Bank, officials said.

The alert is expected to heighten further as of Sunday when the five-day 'Eid Al Adha' ends and the likelihood of an Islamist attack is believed to increase.

Extra soldiers will be sent Sunday to the divided West Bank city of Hebron where the zealous community of Jewish settlers organise an annual Passover street celebration.

"The higher level of alert is justified by the threats of attacks by Palestinian Islamic militants and will be maintained until the start of May

after the celebrations marking Israel's 50th anniversary," said police minister Avigdor Kahalani.

Concern over possible bombings or other attacks was particularly high following threats by the Islamist group Hamas to avenge the death of Sharif, whose body was found March 29 at the scene of a car-bomb explosion in the Palestinian-ruled West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) cleared Israel of responsibility in Sharif's killing, saying their investigation showed the Islamist was slain by fellow Hamas members in an internal power struggle.

Hamas has rejected this version and accused Palestinian police of collaborating with Israel to kill Sharif, considered a key figure behind a spate of suicide bombings which killed dozens of Israelis over the past four years.

Israeli security officials fear that an escalating feud between Hamas and the PNA

over the affair could lead to Hamas attacks, not on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's administration but on Israel.

In a series of statements issued this week, the armed branch of Hamas vowed massive revenge attacks against Israel and Jewish interests worldwide.

The Israeli government has warned it would hold the PNA responsible for any terror attacks, asserting that Mr. Arafat has failed to honour his commitment under peace agreements to uproot the armed opposition group.

Passover, which begins at sundown Friday and lasts eight days, celebrates Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt in biblical times, which was considered the defining moment in the creation of the Jewish people.

The holiday begins with the festive Seder supper Friday night, a tradition observed by even non-practising Jewish families.

Despite the security alert

inside Israel and around Jewish settlements in occupied areas, the Israeli army has not followed its practice of recent years of sealing off the Palestinian territories for the holiday.

Military sources said senior generals opposed imposing a travel ban on West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, which would prevent tens of thousands of labourers from their day jobs in Israel.

"We decided as a policy that we would allow the continued movement of people as in the past few months" when the travel restrictions have been gradually relaxed, said General Yaacov Orr, coordinator of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.

Israel routinely seals the territories, sometimes for months, after big anti-Israeli attacks and during major holidays, creating widespread economic hardships which many say fuel despair and extremism among the Palestinians.



ACTORS REENACT CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS: An actor playing a bloody Jesus Christ, wearing a crown of thorns, stumbles with a large cross Friday as he is whipped and paraded by Roman soldiers along the Via Dolorosa during a reenactment of the crucifixion by a group of Christian pilgrims from California. Thousands of pilgrims took part in Good Friday processions through the Old City as in other parts of the holy city Jews prepared for the Passover holiday commemorating the biblical exodus from slavery in Egypt and Muslim faithful gathered to pray at Al Aqsa Mosque for the 'Eid Al Adha' (Reuters photo)

Peace Now condemns Hebron settler rally for 50th anniversary

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli anti-settlers group Peace Now denounced Friday a rally planned by Jewish settlers in the West Bank town of Hebron this weekend to mark the 50th anniversary of the creation of Israel.

Peace Now said in a statement that the planned rally was a "disgrace for Israel," calling for a simultaneous sit-in protest, although the Israeli army had refused to

give permission for such a counter demonstration.

The group criticised the Israeli government for financing the rally, planned for Sunday, saying the Jewish settler community in Hebron included "the craziest of the extremists."

Several government ministers and top rabbis are due to attend the settlers' rally in Hebron to mark Israel's 50th anniversary celebra-

tions and the 30th year of Jewish settlement in the town.

The settlers hold a rally every year to mark Jewish Passover celebrations, marching by the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a site sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

Some 400 Jewish settlers live in enclaves in the fifth of Hebron which remains under the control of the Israeli army.

Paper says 'mini-summit' at hand to draw up Arab 'action plan'

RABAT (AP) — A "mini-Arab summit" likely aimed at coming up with an "action plan" to unblock the Middle East peace process will be held soon in Rabat, a Moroccan newspaper reported Friday, citing official sources.

One dead, eight wounded in riot after Egyptian police torture claim

CAIRO (AFP) — One person was killed and eight wounded, four of them policemen, when residents of a Nile Delta village attacked police they accused of torturing a villager to death. Egypt's interior ministry said Friday.

Police arrested 25 residents of the village of Wabur Al Nur, in the Bilqas region 160 kilometres north of the capital, overnight for "stirring up public disorder," the ministry statement said.

According to the statement,

the disturbances started following the death of Wahid Al Sayed Ahmad, a 25-year-old driver.

"The villagers claimed that a police officer detained him. The citizen, who was away from home for two days, returned home, where he died of a swelling of the spleen," the ministry said.

"During the funeral villagers stoned police, wounding four of them and smashing the windows of a passing train," the statement said.

The police fired tear-gas canisters to disperse the villagers, leading to the death of Al Meadawi Ahmad Al Meadawi, 28, and injuries to four civilians, the ministry statement said.

The opposition daily Al Wafd reported that police had arrested Ahmad to pressure his brother to give himself up to serve an outstanding prison sentence.

It said his body was later found near the village police station "bearing signs of torture."

Saudi Arabia sends 125 tonnes of Hajj meat to Pakistan, Sudan

JEDDAH (AP) — Saudi Arabia has sent 125 tonnes of meat from livestock slaughtered during the Mecca pilgrimage to Pakistan and Sudan, the official Saudi Press Agency reported Friday.

Two Pakistan International Airlines planes flew from Saudi Arabia Thursday and Friday carrying a total of 60 tonnes of meat to be distributed among the Pakistani poor and Afghan refugees in the north-western city of Peshawar, said the agency.

A Saudi Arabian Airlines

plane flew Thursday to Sudan with 65 tonnes of meat.

The slaughter of animals is one of the rituals of the annual Islamic pilgrimage or Hajj, which ended in Mecca Thursday. The sacrifice symbolises God's saving of Abraham's son, who was Ismail according to Muslim tradition, after the patriarch offered to sacrifice him.

More than 260,000 sheep, 3,130 camels and 2,650 calves were slaughtered by Wednesday, said the Islamic Development Bank, which oversees the

sacrifice and distribution of the meat.

The carcasses of about 20,500 sheep and 827 camels and calves were distributed among the pilgrims and the poor of Mecca.

The government decided to give the remaining meat to the needy of Pakistan and Sudan.

Pilgrims who don't wish to have an animal slaughtered on their behalf may fast instead, or buy a coupon from booths of the Islamic Development Bank for about \$100. Both measures are viewed as sacrifices.

Taliban says Iran blocked river, flooded villages

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Afghanistan's hard-line Taliban army accused Iran Friday of blocking the Helmand River on its side of the border, causing the river to swell, overflow its banks and flood dozens of villages in southwestern Afghanistan.

"We want the international community to do something... this is inhuman," said the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Mujahid, who said he received details of the flooding from the Taliban headquarters in Kandahar in southeastern Afghanistan.

He said dozens of villages in Nimroz province have been inundated with water, which was trapped on the Afghan side of the border.

It was not immediately possible to get a comment from Iran or to independently confirm the report.

"We are asking the United Nations and the international community to come to the area and see for themselves and to help us," he said in a telephone interview.

Environmentalists in Pakistan said that satellite pho-

tographs would be able to verify the flooding as a result of the Helmand River overflowing its banks. They also said that it is possible for Iran to dam the river on its side of the border, although it would be a violation of international treaties.

The Taliban army, which controls roughly 85 per cent of Afghanistan, sees Iran as an adversary and has repeatedly accused Tehran of supporting its northern-based opposition, particularly its Shiite Muslim partners.

The anti-Taliban alliance largely represents Afghanistan's minorities, including Shiite Muslims. Most Iranians are Shiite Muslims.

"We want the world to stop this inhuman act against the people of Afghanistan," he said.

In recent weeks southern Afghanistan has been devastated by flash flooding much of it in southwestern parts of the country. International aid workers estimated the death toll from March floods at as many as 100 people.

NEWS IN BRIEF

71 injured in Turkish train collision
ISPARTA (AP) — A train slammed into the back of a waiting train in a station in western Turkey, injuring at least 71 people, the Anatolia news agency reported Friday. One of the injured was in serious condition. The accident occurred late Thursday in the city of Isparta when a train carrying 55 passengers from the southern city of Burdur collided with a stationary train with 130 people on board.

Israeli warplanes violate Cypriot flight zone — report
NICOSIA (AFP) — Six Israeli F-16 warplanes violated the Cypriot flight information region Wednesday, the official CNA news agency quoted foreign ministry sources as saying Thursday. The ministry was to raise the matter Friday with the Israeli authorities, the sources added. They said the violation occurred around 1100 GMT near the airport of Paphos in the west of the island. Israeli Ambassador Shemi Tzur told CNA that "up to the moment there was no official protest" from the Cypriot government. He mentioned that the two coun-

\$3,000 a month 'go-up' in salaries in Netanyahu's office
TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and two top aides burn up \$3,000 in taxpayers' money each month smoking deluxe cigars, the Yediot Ahronot newspaper reported Friday. According to the newspaper, Mr. Netanyahu, his spokesman Shai Bazzak and Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh smoke each week a box of top grade cigars made by the Davidoff firm. The boxes cost about \$750 a piece for a grand total of \$3,000 per month, paid for out of the general operating budget for the prime minister's office, the newspaper said. Yediot Ahronot said Mr. Netanyahu refused to smoke only Cuban cigars, but switched to the Dominican Republic-grown Davidoffs after becoming prime minister in June 1996 — a gesture towards the United States which enforces a trade embargo on the regime of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

118 pilgrims stampede killed
JERUSALEM (AP) — Ninety-eight pilgrims were killed and 118 injured in a stampede during the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia's official press agency said Friday. The stampede occurred in the Holy City of Mecca. According to Reuters, news of 118 pilgrims stampede in the Holy City of Mecca. According to Reuters, news of 118 pilgrims stampede in the Holy City of Mecca. According to Reuters, news of 118 pilgrims stampede in the Holy City of Mecca.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO
16:10 Cartoon — The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest.
16:30 French Programmes — Square One TV.
18:00 Drama — Neighbours.
19:00 French Programme — L'oeuf de Colomb.
19:30 News headlines.
19:35 Quiz Show — You Bet Your Life.
20:00 Cinema, Cinema.
20:30 Prison.
21:10 Drama — Sirens.
22:00 News in English.
22:30 Feature film.
23:59 Comedy — "Are You Being Served?"
00:20 End of TX.

PRAYER TIMES

04:48 Fajr
06:08 (Sunrise) Duha
12:37 Dhuhr
16:12 Asr
19:05 Maghreb
20:26 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefleth, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Hot weather conditions will prevail for the three coming days. Temperature will rise above average by 7-10 degrees centigrade, and winds will be southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba it will be hot, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 16/30
Aqaba 20/39
Deserts 12/32
Jordan Valley 18/36

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 29 Aqaba 37 Humidity readings: Amman 18 per cent. Aqaba 38 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahrah 820425
Dr. Wissam Hazyria 748563
Dr. Hattin Hammoun 6749840
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyir 4620115

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 845402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 921199
The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 336813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akhleh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155

ARRIVALS
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)883323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250.

ROYAL JORDANIAN (RJ) FLIGHTS
07:10 Aden (RJ)
08:10 Tel Aviv (RJ)
08:15 Aqaba (RJ)
09:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Jeddah (RJ)
10:30 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:50 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)
11:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:35 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 Cairo (RJ)
19:10 London, Berlin (RJ)
20:25 Lenz (add) (RJ)
22:05 Ghardaqah (add) (RJ)
00:00 Paris (RJ)
00:00 Frankfurt (RJ)
04:00 Jeddah (RJ)
05:30 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights
06:05 London, Damascus (BA)
14:10 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
18:00 Dubai, Muscat (EK)
19:00 Paris (AF)
19:05 Frankfurt (LH)
23:35 Cairo (MS)
23:40 Amsterdam (KL)
23:40 Beirut (ME)
01:05 London, Damascus (BA)
02:05 Belgrade (JU)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00 Aqaba (RJ)
06:05 Tel Aviv (RJ)
06:35 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Aqaba, Lenz (add) (RJ)
09:10 Bangkok (RJ)
10:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00 Paris (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:00 London (RJ)
14:45 Brussels (RJ)
14:55 Madrid (RJ)
19:00 Ghardaqah (add) (RJ)
21:10 Riyadh, Doha (RJ)
21:20 Bombay (RJ)
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
01:30 Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
05:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
07:00 Beirut (ME)
07:35 Damascus, London (BA)
15:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
00:40 Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
13:10 Belgrade (JU)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)
(No flights on Saturday)

what's going on

EXHIBITIONS
Exhibition of works by Jordanian artists, including the late artist, Abdullatif Abu Qasem, at the Royal Cultural Centre, until April 12.

What's going on
The Amman Municipality has announced that it will be holding a series of exhibitions in the city's museums and galleries. The first exhibition will be held at the Amman Museum, featuring a collection of ancient artifacts. The second exhibition will be held at the Amman Gallery, featuring a collection of modern art. The third exhibition will be held at the Amman Theatre, featuring a collection of theatrical costumes. The fourth exhibition will be held at the Amman Library, featuring a collection of books and documents. The fifth exhibition will be held at the Amman Sports Centre, featuring a collection of sports equipment. The sixth exhibition will be held at the Amman Hotel, featuring a collection of furniture and decor. The seventh exhibition will be held at the Amman Restaurant, featuring a collection of dishes and drinks. The eighth exhibition will be held at the Amman Bar, featuring a collection of cocktails and snacks. The ninth exhibition will be held at the Amman Club, featuring a collection of games and activities. The tenth exhibition will be held at the Amman Park, featuring a collection of plants and flowers.

Iraq b

(Continued from page 1)
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Home News

Schools, government offices reopen after 'Eid holiday

AMMAN (J.T.) — Life in Jordan returns to normal today following a five-day public holiday marking 'Eid Al Adha (Feast of Sacrifice), during which government departments, schools and public institutions were closed.

According to a report in the Al Ra'i daily, at least 7,400 Jordanians spent their holiday in Egyptian resorts, mainly Sharm Al Sheikh.

Abed Quntar, director of Royal Wings, a subsidiary of Royal Jordanian (RJ), was quoted by Al Ra'i as

saying that the airline organised 18 chartered flights, in addition to 12 flights by RJ and 10 flights by Egypt Air, to transport the holidaymakers.

He said 90 per cent of the flights flew to Sharm Al Sheikh, adding that some of the flights were delayed due to the congestion of vacationers at the airports.

According to Mr. Quntar, Jordanians chose to spend the holiday at Egyptian resorts due to special travel rates.

In addition, he said, Jordan

has been promoting travel programmes to Egypt in the wake of the Luxor terrorist attack on tourists last year and in implementation of resolutions passed by a regional conference on promoting tourism in Egypt in 1998.

In other developments during the 'Eid holiday in Jordan, the Civil Defence Department reported Thursday that a total of 144 accidents were reported. These included cases in which fire engines were called in to put out fires.

Outgoing UNHCR representative thanks King, Crown Prince for continued support

AMMAN (Petra) — The representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan has paid tribute to His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan and the Jordanian government for the facilities that have enabled UNHCR to shoulder its humanitarian mission over the years.

In a statement marking the end of her 30-month tour of duty in Jordan, Zobida Hassim-Ashagrie said the office has received all possible assistance and backing from Jordan's official and non-governmental organisations in support of UNHCR's mission to care for the refugees that have come to the Kingdom over the past years from Iraq, Bosnia, Sudan, Algeria, Libya and other parts of the Middle East.

Mrs. Hassim-Ashagrie noted that Prince Hassan opened a regional meeting in Amman in March 1997 to devise a comprehensive formula addressing problems connected with migrants from areas in the Middle East and Asia.

She said the Asian and Middle East regions have witnessed the movement of eight million people over the past 17 years who have been displaced, many of whom landed in or passed through Jordan.

She also paid tribute to Prince Hassan for calling for the establishment of an international Zakat Fund in Islamic states in order to help address the problem of refugees.

Mrs. Hassim-Ashagrie noted that UNHCR's work with Jordan took place at the university level. She pointed out that Yarmouk University has opened a special centre for cooperation with the UNHCR office in information related to refugees, adding that the UNHCR office in Amman provided the centre with \$20,000 worth of equipment needed for documentation.

Mrs. Hassim-Ashagrie said she has been appointed to a new post in Angola, where she will have to supervise the repatriation or settlement of 240,000 refugees.

AMMAN (J.T.) — The body of the late Akef Fayeze, a prominent Jordanian tribal and political leader who died on Wednesday, was laid to rest Thursday at a cemetery in his hometown of Um Al Amad, south of Amman.

His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by HRH Prince Hamzah, HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's cultural secretary, and Chief of the Royal Court Fayeze Tarawneh visited the home of the late Mr. Fayeze and offered

Akef Fayeze, veteran politician, dies at 76



Akef Fayeze, veteran politician, died at 76.

Amman to host IPU meeting in 2000

AMMAN (J.T.) — The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Sour, has been informed by the president of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), Miguel Martinez, that the union has decided to hold its April 2000 meeting in Amman.

According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Sour, who is attending the 99th meeting of the IPU in the Namibian capital of Windhoek, praised Mr. Martinez's role in the IPU. For his part, Mr. Martinez expressed his appreciation of Jordan's Hashemite leadership and the country's citizens.

During remarks to a preparatory meeting of Arab delegations to the IPU session, Mr. Sour demanded that the Palestinian Legislative Council be admitted as a full IPU member.

He also asked Arab states to support efforts by the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) to be recognised as an associate member of the IPU.

Mr. Sour was received by Namibian President Sam Nujoma, to whom he conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Queen Noor receives well-wishers to mark 'Eid

AMMAN (J.T.) — On the occasion of 'Eid Al Adha, Her Majesty Queen Noor welcomed at Qasr Basman women community leaders from the country's governorates, representatives of national women's organisations and the wives of government and Royal Court officials and parliamentarians, according to a press release. Deputising for the Queen, HRH Princess Raiyah visited the SOS Children's Village in Tabarbour, where she chatted with the children and distributed presents among them, the statement said.

No Jordanians killed in Hajj stampede — minister

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbad on Friday said no Jordanian nationals were among those killed in a stampede during the religious "stoning of Satan" ritual on the final day of the Hajj in Saudi Arabia. In a telephone interview with Jordan Television, Dr. Abbad said the accompanying Jordanian medical expedition was sent to hospitals to determine if there were any Jordanian casualties. He added that reports confirmed that no Jordanian pilgrims died in the stampede near the Holy City of Mecca. According to the Reuters news agency, 118 pilgrims died in a stampede in Mina, the location of the ritual. Twenty-four Indians were among the victims, with others from Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Pakistan and Turkey.

Former Amman Mayor Fawzi dies

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Friday announced the death of Ahmad Fawzi, former minister of public works and former mayor of Amman. Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi also conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family.

what's going on

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of works by Jordanian artists Ramin Rashed, Abdullah Thabshat and Qasem Al Dwairi at the Royal Cultural Centre, until April 16.

* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.

Environmental NGO aiming to raise awareness on shared regional heritage

By Hasher Majoka
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — EcoPeace, a U.S.-registered environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO), has brought together a number of NGOs across the region for the first time to raise awareness on the challenges facing environmental heritage sites that span international borders.

Over 200 local NGOs from Jordan, Egypt, the Palestinian territories and Israel are now working under the coordination of EcoPeace to respond to the needs of the environment and potential disasters, which know no political boundaries.

Protection of joint environmental heritage demands combined action by the countries sharing it, Munqeth Mehayar, a Jordanian board member of EcoPeace, told the Jordan Times.

Established in 1995 with an initial \$50,000 grant from United States Agency for International Development, EcoPeace concentrates primarily on three important shared environmental sites. These include the Gulf of Aqaba, the Dead Sea and the surrounding Rift Valley, and the eastern Mediterranean Sea, he added.

EcoPeace, through its regional operations office in Arab east Jerusalem and branch offices in each of the four countries, seeks to highlight the problems facing these sites and help find solutions. Currently, eight volunteers from the European Union are working in the region. Two of the volunteers currently stationed in Jordan are assigned to work with the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society (JREDS), Mr. Mehayar said.

EcoPeace has launched sustainable development projects in both the Red and Dead sea areas and is striving to highlight the potentially disastrous consequences of unsustainable development, which he said

would threaten the region with the loss of these two unique environmental treasures.

"The Gulf of Aqaba, essentially a giant lake connected to the already-polluted Red Sea by the narrow Straits of Tiran, has some of the greatest diversity in marine life in the world," Mr. Mehayar said. Over 100 species of fish and over 300 kinds of hard and soft coral reefs are to be found in the gulf. Moreover, it is the site of the most northerly coral reefs to be found anywhere in the world, he added.

However, this unique ecosystem is threatened by the ever-increasing development along its shores. There are plans to set up new oil refineries along the coast of the Gulf, along with a huge projected increase in tourist facilities and related infrastructure, Mr. Mehayar said.

In response, EcoPeace, with financial assistance from Germany's Heinrich Böll Foundation, has launched a sustainable tourism development programme for the area.

EcoPeace volunteers have provided hotels, resorts and other tourism-related institutions with information to help them conserve electricity, recycle water, dispose of sewage in an eco-friendly manner and conserve resources in general, Mr. Mehayar said. Furthermore, EcoPeace is assisting with sustainable tourism development studies and coordinating its activities with local officials, he added.

EcoPeace's other sustainable tourism development project, in the Dead Sea area, seeks to address similar environmental concerns. It intends to develop a coordinated strategy for checking the annual shrinkage of the Dead Sea, ensure tourism-related development is sustainable in the long term and find possible solutions to the harm already done to the area by unchecked tourism development and extensive potash extraction on both sides of the Dead Sea, Mr. Mehayar said.

Iraq blasts British plan

(Continued from page 1)

worth of oil every six months because of technical problems caused by damage inflicted during the Gulf war and the sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Cook said in a speech last month that the meeting, grouping all the key bodies, including U.N. agencies and various non-governmental groups, would look at the best ways of spending the money and at what programmes would be implemented.

Britain and the United States have accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of deliberately blocking the "oil-for-food" scheme and say he is to blame for his people's suffering.

Mr. Sahhaf said Britain "was not committed to removing the sanctions against Iraq after making sure that it has implemented its commitments."

He added: "British officials have in February and March issued anti-Iraq statements and have taken part actively in

fabricating lies and mobilised their naval forces in the Arabian Gulf to set the stage for the launch of a new American-British assault against Iraq."

A U.S. naval armada remains poised in the Gulf, but U.N. officials now speak of a new chapter in relations with Baghdad following the successful completion last week of the first round of U.N. inspections of Iraq's presidential palaces.

A Feb. 23 pact between Iraq and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, allowing the inspectors unfettered access to all eight sites, averted a U.S. military strike against Iraq.

Mr. Sahhaf urged all parties that have received invitations not to attend the meeting. "This conference is nothing but a mistaken attempt to create a new crisis," he added.

"Iraq's interest lies first of all in lifting the tyrannical embargo imposed eight years ago, which makes Britain not suitable to talk objectively of any contribution to the benefit of Iraq and the Iraqi people," he added.

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He also asked Arab states to support efforts by the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) to be recognised as an associate member of the IPU.

Mr. Sour was received by Namibian President Sam Nujoma, to whom he conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Saudis say stampeding pilgrims ignored official instructions

(Continued from page 1)

wounded to hospitals, the Saudi Gazette reported.

"If security forces had not intervened to stop the rush, thousands of pilgrims would have died," a police official said on condition of anonymity.

Before the stampede began, police had been holding back crowds outside the area where

pilgrims cast pebbles at three pillars symbolising the temptations of Satan. Saudi officials say Asian Muslims tend not to believe in a symbolic throw and rush to get close enough for their pebbles to strike the pillars.

When security forces began to allow pilgrims through, the crowd surged setting off the stampede.

Many elderly pilgrims faint-

ed and were trampled. Some people, who were standing on an elevated walkway on their way to the pillars, plunged some 5 meters to their deaths.

Police and doctors said those killed were from Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and the Middle East.

Thursday was the final day of the pilgrimage. Ambulances rushed to the scene, and Saudi television

showed soldiers carrying a body out on a stretcher. One soldier was trying to revive another casualty whose face was covered by an oxygen mask. Another offered water to an elderly man, who grabbed the bottle with a trembling hand.

Hundreds of pilgrims lined up outside Mina hospitals Thursday night, anxious to know the fate of their relatives.

Among them was Ziad Daher from Syria, who was looking for his brother Farouk. "I lost him in the crowd about 12 noon," he said, tears in his eyes. "I haven't seen him since." Scattered umbrellas, shirts, slippers and shoes littered the scene of the fatal stampede late Thursday night.

After the stampede, only a few thousand pilgrims were at the site stoning the pillars.

N. Ireland breakthrough reached

(Continued from page 1)

will be expected to govern their land of 1.6 million people together in a 108-member assembly.

That would end 26 years of "direct rule" from London, instituted after the British abolished a Protestant-dominated parliament that had governed Northern Ireland since its creation in 1921.

The parties would participate in a governing cabinet, with the largest party taking the role of a prime minister. Critically, the new Belfast assembly will be expected to cooperate formally with the Irish Republic in a north-south council of lawmakers. This measure is considered essential to win support from the north's Catholics, who generally favour the unification of Ireland.

But the Protestant bloc appeared to have won a substantial concession, because the Belfast assembly will have the right to approve decisions taken by its members in the cross-border council. Catholics had pushed for the council to wield independent powers.

Critically, the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party — brought into the talks eight months ago following an Irish

Republican Army truce — appears to have accepted the agreement, which stops so far short of its traditional goal of uniting Ireland.

Before the accord was announced, however, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams said he would need the formal approval of grassroots members of the party, whose annual conference is scheduled later this month.

The Ulster Unionists, Northern Ireland's main pro-British Protestant party, will also face stern opposition from Protestants who suspect that any settlement will concede too much to those seeking Irish unification.

The accord will have to be approved by majority votes next month in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, where voters also will be asked to approve the softening of their constitution's territorial claim to Northern Ireland.

The agreement does not mean a certain end to shootings and bombings in Northern Ireland, since dissidents have already broken away from both the IRA and those pro-British paramilitary groups who called truces to get into the talks.

story" over Sharif's death.

"We maintain the right to tell the truth to the Palestinian public. The damning truths show that [Israel] and its security services are responsible for the assassination of Sharif, with the help of Rajub," the statement said.

Hamas said Mr. Abdul Rahim's demands and the police moves against Mr. Ramtani and Reuters "confirmed just how fragile and ridiculous the authority's story is."

The death of Sharif, who was hunted by Israel for his role in planning suicide attacks which have killed dozens of Israelis since 1994, sparked a confrontation in Palestinian ranks when the authority said he had been

slain by Mr. Awadallah in a fight over leadership.

Mr. Awadallah reportedly heads Hamas' armed wing, Izzedin Al Qassam, in the West Bank and like Sharif is wanted by Israel for his role in bomb attacks.

Hamas vehemently denied the police claim, then escalated tensions by accusing Col. Rajub of killing Sharif and accusing Mr. Abdul Rahim and other Palestinian officials of seeking to cover-up the murder in a bid to appease Israel.

Mr. Abdul Rahim denied the authority was seeking a confrontation with Hamas, the main Palestinian group opposed to peace with Israel, but said splits within the movement were a possible "threat to Palestinian security."

Naddehs, Sa'ad laid to rest, one of two stolen cars found

(Continued from page 1)

newspaper said that the police have found several fingerprints at the murder scene and an investigation was carried out to identify these prints.

A lawyer who was very close to Naddeh told the Jordan Times that the prominent lawyer was in London with his family one day before he was murdered.

The advocate, who asked not to be named, said that Naddeh had received death threats a few days before the murder "from unidentified sources."

"He was advised to take some security precautions but he refused and said that neither bodyguards nor anything else could prevent death," the lawyer said.

"We informed the police about these threats and took some measures which were not enough to protect his life," the lawyer added.

Naddeh, a leading expert in administrative lawsuits, undertook court cases that involved the alleged embezzlement of JD180 million in the Amman Bank for Investment and the Jordan Spin-

ning and Weaving Company.

More than 17 persons were charged in the case, including prominent businessmen and lawyers.

Naddeh also defended suspects who were charged in the case of the Petra Bank.

Sa'ad was among two psychiatrists who testified in the trial of Ahmad Dakamseh, the Jordanian soldier who shot to death seven Israeli schoolgirls in Baqura on March 1997.

His testimony helped in reducing Dakamseh's sentence from death to life imprisonment.

Yeltsin protégé Kiriyenko faces crushing defeat in parliament

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian would-be prime minister Sergei Kiriyenko tried to persuade a sceptical parliament Friday that he was the man to pull Russia out of the economic mire, but the 35-year-old technocrat was facing a humiliating defeat.

Mr. Kiriyenko has been Boris Yeltsin's protégé since the Russian president sacked Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his government on March 23, but deputies in the lower house state Duma remained unimpressed, and were set to reject his candidacy in a first-round vote Friday.

The vote was expected to take place soon after 1100 GMT.

Any last hopes of a reasonable result for Mr. Kiriyenko disappeared when the only party hitherto supporting him in the 450-seat Duma, the ultra-nationalist LDPR, bloc led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, said it would not give him its vote.

"Our faction has decided in its entirety not to vote for

Kiriyenko's candidacy," said Alexei Mitrofanov, number two in the LDPR, which has 51 seats.

The pro-government Our Home Is Russia bloc, with 65 seats, said most of its deputies would support Mr. Kiriyenko, but the Kremlin newcomer appeared hard pressed for any other votes.

All other parties in parliament have expressed reservations about his candidacy, with the Communist-led leftist bloc, which almost commands a majority on its own, pledging a universal no vote.

Parliament has three chances to approve the president's candidate. Three no votes entitle the head of state to dissolve the chamber and call fresh legislative elections.

Mr. Kiriyenko did not falter as he delivered a rapid-fire, 30-minute appraisal of the critical problems facing the Russian economy and his plans to stave off financial crisis.

"What worries me more than my own candidacy is the path the country is taking," Mr. Kiriyenko told the

Duma. "Now we must realise that the situation is very difficult."

Mr. Kiriyenko outlined budgetary rigour and defence of the ruble as two main planks of his economic programme, but also stressed the need for administrative reforms to root out corruption.

In a gloomy assessment, Mr. Kiriyenko warned that the federal budget stood to lose 10 billion rubles (\$1.5 billion) in 1998 from the global oil price slump, and Russia's external debt had become "intolerable," rising to \$120 billion, compared with \$109 billion in 1997.

If nothing was done to rectify the situation "by 2003 some 70 per cent of the federal budget will be given over to (external) debt," he said.

He said that he planned to fill his cabinet with "professionals" and added that the new government would be slimmed down in comparison with its predecessor.

"A good state is a modest state," Mr. Kiriyenko said. "The federal government

must start by reforming itself. If administrative costs are to be reduced, we must start with the government."

The baby-faced, bespectacled former energy minister, who has just one year's experience in the government, chose not to brighten up his economics lecture with colourful graphics, although the liberal daily *Sevodaya* said technicians had worked for two days preparing such visual aids.

In a radio address earlier Friday, Mr. Yeltsin said he had "no other candidacy" to present to parliament should Mr. Kiriyenko fail to pass the first vote.

"We have been living without a government for too long," Mr. Yeltsin said. "Perhaps the Duma is ready to wait for another week or more, but the economy will not tolerate it."

Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembskiy, quoted by ITAR-TASS, said Mr. Yeltsin would propose Mr. Kiriyenko's name to parliament immediately after a "no" vote, if parliament rejected his nominee.



Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov (left) listens to the address of Prime Minister-designate Sergei Kiriyenko in the state Duma. Kiriyenko shrugged off opposition demands to form a coalition government and said Friday his cabinet would include only professionals (Reuters photo)

20,000 march peacefully through Pristina

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Twenty thousand ethnic Albanians marched peacefully through Pristina Friday as their leader Ibrahim Rugova promised that peace talks with the Belgrade government "will certainly take place."

The street demonstration by the majority Albanians, who are seeking autonomy for the southern Serbian province, drew no apparent police intervention, contrary to a protest Thursday in which police injured at least five demonstrators.

Friday's demonstrators sat on the steps of Serbian government buildings, making the "V for victory" sign before dispersing after about 30 minutes on instructions from organisers.

Mr. Rugova, at his weekly press conference, continued to object to the talks venue chosen by the Serbs, Kosovo's government buildings. He said Belgrade's stance was "intended more to give the impression of wanting to negotiate than actually moving things forward."

Mr. Rugova, head of the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL), the main opposition to the Serbian regime in the province, gave no indication whether he would attend negotiations scheduled at the same place by a Serbian government delegation next Thursday.

"The Serbs are going to put on the same show," he said, adding however that he thought talks with top Yugoslav officials would eventually take place, at which "each party will enter the discussions with

their own proposals."

He said the negotiating agenda drafted by his advisers and released Wednesday "should pose no obstacle to the talks," which he said would take place "necessarily in the presence of a third party."

The platform is built around "principles of self-determination and independence for Kosovo."

The Albanians have boy-

cotted 10 sessions of talks scheduled in Pristina by the Serbian authorities, which for their part have rejected the Kosovo Albanians' demand that talks take place in the presence of foreign mediation.

A Serbian government delegation has been in Pristina since March 12 waiting in vain to meet with ethnic Albanian representatives.

Referendum on Kosovo a delaying tactic

BONN (AFP) — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel condemned as "a delaying tactic" a Serbian decision to hold a referendum on international mediation in the Kosovo crisis, in a statement Friday.

Mr. Kinkel said the April 23 referendum, proposed by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and accepted by parliament Wednesday, was "an avoidance manoeuvre, a step in the wrong direction, and a new barrier in the path of settling the conflict."

The international community would not "be influenced by delaying tactics so transparent," said Mr. Kinkel.

He warned Belgrade it risked facing sanctions, notably a suspension of credit, when the international Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia next meets at the end of April.

In a meeting on March 25, the six-power Contact Group decided to delay imposing sanctions by four weeks to give Mr. Milosevic more time to enter into dialogue with Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

Mr. Kinkel said "no notable progress" had been made, and accused Mr. Milosevic of failing to respond adequately to the demand for "credible dialogue." He said that "an exclusively Serbian dialogue will not work."

Albanian representatives have turned down offers of dialogue with a Serbian government delegation until Yugoslavia agrees to international mediation, a demand Belgrade has rejected so far.

"Belgrade's return ticket into Europe, international organisations, and financial institutions depends on its attitude over the Kosovo question," Mr. Kinkel said.

He said Kosovo Albanian demands to end rule from Belgrade were legitimate, although he condemned as unacceptable any terrorist action by Albanian separatists.

The ethnic Albanians who make up 90 per cent of the population of the formerly autonomous province want independence or at least full republic status within Yugoslavia, on a par with Serbia and Montenegro.

U.S. welcomes Bulgaria's CD clampdown

SOFIA (AFP) — U.S. authorities welcomed Friday a clampdown by Bulgaria on pirate CD makers, noting Sofia had taken "significant steps" to fight the problem after it was threatened with trade sanctions.

The U.S. embassy here agreed with the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) that Bulgaria, with a reputation as one of the world's biggest manufacturers, is serious about fighting the problem.

But it added: "What is important now is a continued, sustained commitment over time to addressing the issue."

"The embassy agrees in general terms with the statement made by the IFPI representative yesterday," said an embassy statement. "We too think that the government of Bulgaria has taken significant steps to address this problem."

"We are persuaded of the government's commitment to resolving this issue."

The IFPI said Thursday it was "encouraged" by Sofia's clampdown on pirate CD makers in Bulgaria. "The government is serious in their intentions," said Ian Grant of the London-based IFPI.

The IFPI, the key international body policing such matters, called last year for neighbouring countries including Greece to impose trade sanctions on Bulgaria.

In November U.S. authorities joined the call, giving Sofia an ultimatum of April 1998 to stop the production and distribution of pirate CDs.

Cambodia police deny attack on U.N. rights worker

PHNOM PENH (R) — A Cambodian police chief Friday denied that security officials beat up a U.N. human rights worker and said the man was attacked by people in a squatter community.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, who visited Cambodia in January, Thursday accused Cambodian security forces of beating one of her staff members and demanded a full investigation by Phnom Penh.

But Phnom Penh municipal police commissioner, General Neth Savoeun, denied it was security men who attacked the rights worker on April 2.

"I deny any report that security officials or police beat a U.N. human rights worker," Neth Savoeun told Reuters.

"The human rights worker had a problem with squatter people when he tried to get close and take pictures," he said.

A U.N. official in the capital Phnom Penh said the rights worker was beaten by a group of men, some in plain clothes, some in security force uniforms, when he went to investigate a demonstration as part of the U.N.'s normal monitoring activities.

The man had been travelling with two colleagues in a vehicle with U.N. licence plates. At one point during the incident police surrounded and trained guns on the vehicle, one human rights worker said.

The attack came as political tension ran high in Phnom Penh following street fights between supporters and opponents of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Mr. Ranariddh, ousted by his co-premier Hun Sen in a coup last year, returned to Cambodia for a four-day visit on March 30.

The United Nations Human Rights Office in Phnom Penh employs about 50 staff members, including local staff.

Thomas Hammarberg, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's special representative for human rights in Cambodia, said on Monday the pace of political killings was picking up.

He told a news conference in Geneva Monday that 50 opposition figures had been killed since August in addition to 41 documented executions by security forces following Hun Sen's coup.

The United Nations has agreed to coordinate observation of Cambodia's election on July 26 but reserved the right to halt aid over concerns about problems which might hinder a fair poll, including human rights.

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Thousands of Indonesian students turn up at peaceful rally in capital

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of students turned out Friday for a peaceful rally in the grounds of a Muslim school calling for political reforms and a new leadership as lightly-armed security forces stood by.

Some 5,000 students listened attentively as a member from the Union of Muslim Students in Java delivered a fiery one-hour speech after Friday prayer, calling on the government to take responsibility for the current crisis.

"The government must take responsibility for the crisis and ask for the people's forgiveness," the speaker shouted from a podium to a sea of women in traditional Muslim head-dresses and men in traditional batik shirts.

No arrests or clashes were reported during the rally that lasted well into Friday afternoon on the fenced-in soccer field of the Al Azhar school in South Jakarta.

"Is there really no one else in this nation of 200 million people that can lead this country," he asked the crowd, who intermittently voiced their agreement with cries of "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great).

He called on students, members of the parliament and the general population to be critical and not to waiver from demands for an end to the corruption,

collusion and nepotism pervasive in the Indonesian government.

"We call on the people not to believe everything said by the government and to remain critical," he said, as the crowd brandished banners calling for "peaceful reformation" and for the military to "protect the people, not nepotism."

"We are not the enemy ... and we do not want to clash with ABRI," he said, referring to the Indonesian armed forces.

At least 20 students were injured in clashes with the military in the central Java city of Yogyakarta earlier in the month, when security forces tried to prevent students from marching from their campus into the city centre.

University students across Indonesia have been staging rallies since the end of February demanding an end to the 32-year rule of Indonesian President Suharto, who has begun a seventh five-year term in office.

Campus rallies have been tolerated by security forces provided they remain on university grounds, but there have been clashes when students tried to take their protests onto the streets.

Several students have reportedly disappeared after the clashes and at least 11 are still missing.

Colombian rebels could win war against military

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Unless Colombia's military get help, they could lose the war against well-armed leftist guerrillas within five years and the country could turn into a "narco-state," The Washington Post said Friday.

Citing a U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency report, the daily said leftist rebels in Colombia number more than 20,000 and are armed with small aircraft and shoulder-fired missiles brought from former Soviet bloc countries with drug money.

The Colombian military, according to a summary of the report obtained by the daily and two sources with knowledge of the full text, have proved to be inept, ill-trained and poorly equipped, with only one sixth of 120,000 troops equipped and trained for combat.

The rebels, mainly the 15,000-strong Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the 5,000-strong National Liberation Army

(ELN), now control more than 40 per cent of Colombia. About one third of FARC units and half of the ELN's are involved in drug trafficking, which generated tens of millions of dollars to finance guerrilla operations, according to U.S. and Colombian intelligence.

If the rebel movement continues to grow and the Colombian government ceases to function effectively, the report said, Colombia could turn into a "narco-state" within five years.

The deteriorating situation in Colombia has sparked debate in the White House and Pentagon over how the United States can respond to the threat, the daily said.

The U.S. administration is debating whether to increase its \$100 million anti-drug aid programme to Colombia and allow it to be used for counter-insurgency purposes without raising concern over human rights abuses by the Colombian military.

UNICEF protests detention of local worker in Congo

KINSHASA (AFP) — UNICEF said Friday that one of its workers had been detained since early March in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and again refused allegations of aiding rebels there.

The worker, a DRC national, was not told the reason for his arrest, according to the U.N. Children's Fund representative to the DRC, Ibrahim Jabir, adding that he was in "daily" contact with the office of President Laurent Kabila over the detention.

The UNICEF representative also "categorically" denied an allegation by Mr. Kabila that the aid agency was serving as a "mail box" for eastern rebels known as Mai-Mai, who last week attacked a town in North Kivu province before being repelled by government forces.

Late Thursday Mr. Kabila's office repeated the allegation. The president's communications adviser Dominique Sakombi said: "The statement of President Laurent-Desire Kabila that certain international bodies are in collusion with the rebels in the east of the DRC is well-founded."

UNICEF "effectively serves as mail box for the

Mai-Mai rebels. The Congolese government has a complete dossier which proves it," Mr. Sakombi said.

Mr. Kabila, on a visit Monday to the North Kivu provincial capital Goma, specifically accused UNICEF of serving as a "mail service" for the Mai-Mai, according to official radio.

UNICEF in Geneva protested Wednesday, spokeswoman Marie Heuze saying: "We protest energetically. We do not accept to be treated like this."

Ms. Heuze said UNICEF was shocked by Mr. Kabila's remarks, which came as UNICEF was signing a pact in Kinshasa on the rehabilitation of some 350 child soldiers.

Last year, UNICEF gave \$22.2 million to various aid programmes in the DRC mostly concerning health, water, education and "children in difficulty."

Relations between U.N. aid agencies and Mr. Kabila have been strained since soon after he and his rebels overthrew the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last May.

The United Nations has accused Mr. Kabila's rebels of massacring thousands of Rwandan refugees during the seven-month rebellion.

Karadzic's military mastermind slips into obscurity

SARAJEVO (AFP) — While the world anticipates the arrest of Radovan Karadzic, the most wanted war crimes suspect of Bosnia's 1992-95 war, his military mastermind has slipped into obscurity.

General Ratko Mladic, 55, stands co-indicted with Mr. Karadzic for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and is just as keenly sought by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

But he is very much a man in the shadows, a passionate Serb nationalist who oversaw the brutal "ethnic cleansing" of Muslim and Croat areas, but who now has dropped from view as Bosnia-Herzegovina tries to

put the war behind it. "He's gone completely into oblivion," a European diplomat in Sarajevo said.

"In any event, Mladic is not the political threat that Karadzic is," the diplomat told AFP. "He is not part of the political dynamics of Republika Srpska," as Bosnia's Serb entity is known.

Mr. Mladic, succinctly described in an early ICTY wanted poster as "short, stocky, red-faced," has, like Mr. Karadzic, not been seen for many months. His whereabouts are just as mysterious.

Last month the Belgrade weekly *Nedeljni Telegram*, quoting confidential sources, said he was "writing memoirs with a team of his wartime officers" in the east-

ern Bosnian town of Han Pijesak, his wartime headquarters.

Foreign intelligence services are well aware of Mr. Mladic's activities "because powerful publishers from the West are interested in his memoirs," it said.

Last July he was reportedly on holiday by the Adriatic Sea in Montenegro with his wife and 15 bodyguards, but this was denied by the government in Podgorica. Other rumours put him in Belgrade, where his son is said to live.

Manojlo Milovanovic, Mr. Mladic's deputy during the 1992-95 war, and now defence minister of a new Western-backed government in Republika Srpska, said in January that the general was well-protected.

"He is safe," Mr. Milovanovic told Svedok, another Belgrade weekly. "According to the security system, they cannot get Mladic. I hope this will not happen."

By "they" he meant the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR), which Wednesday snatched two Serbs wanted by the ICTY in connection with the Omarska concentration camp near Prijedor, northwest Bosnia, where Muslims were locked up, raped, beaten and killed in the war's early months.

In international eyes, Mr. Mladic's greatest crime would be the July 1995 capture of the isolated U.N.-declared "safe area" of Srebrenica and the ensuing slaughter of its menfolk —

Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

But Mr. Mladic might prefer to cast himself as a tragic hero.

He was two years old when his father, a Communist partisan, was killed in 1945 in combat against the Nazi-backed Croat fascists, the Ustashi.

The boy grew up to be a senior officer in the Yugoslav army, loyal to Marshal Josip Tito's independent brand of communism, until the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s sent him back to his roots and to headline Serb nationalism.

He popped up everywhere during the war that killed an estimated 200,000 people, regularly swigging high-proof "rakija" (brandy) with

U.N. peacekeepers, whose mission he routinely mocked.

Mr. Mladic's mother died early in the war in a mortar attack outside Sarajevo. Later his daughter, a medical student, killed herself, aged 23.

Mr. Mladic was also a master at brinkmanship, and at one point had gathered so much influence inside the Serb leadership that after Mr. Karadzic dismissed him in August 1995, he was soon forced to reinstate him.

But such clout seems to be a thing of the past. "He has been isolated," a diplomat said, and no longer has even the lingering support among Serbs that Mr. Karadzic might still enjoy.

World I

U.N. envoy asks neighbours to imp

arms embargo on

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — U.N. envoy to Afghanistan, Lakshar Brahimi, said Friday that the Afghan conflict would end only if the neighbours agreed to stop sending in weapons.

Mr. Brahimi said that Afghanistan's neighbours have been sending in weapons since the end of the Afghan war in 1992, and that this has kept the conflict alive.

The Algerian diplomat, who had talks with Pakistani officials in Islamabad and the Afghan Taliban militia leaders in Kandahar, said that the U.N. is leaving for a new round of negotiations in a few days.

Mr. Brahimi said the U.N. has been trying to get the Afghan conflict to end, but has been unable to do so. He said that the U.N. is now trying to get the Afghan conflict to end by getting the neighbours to stop sending in weapons.

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Several students have reportedly disappeared after the clashes and at least 11 are still missing.

350 new biotech drugs in development

WASHINGTON (R) — More than 300 different biotechnology medicines are in development, including vaccines, cancer and drugs to treat a wide range of diseases, drugmakers said Friday.

Only half the drugs in development, 151 out of 350, are meant to fight cancer, the report said.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) found that 140 different pharmaceutical companies were working on the drugs.

This is a whole new era that is moving into the public eye and even into the marketplace, said Dr. John H. Garvey, deputy vice president for science and regulatory affairs at PhRMA, said in a telephone interview.

"It's an incredibly exciting time to see disease begin to be tackled at the genetic level. We are now starting to practice what we preach," he said.

Biotechnology medicines in development include a flu vaccine being developed by Genentech of Menlo Park, California, and a cancer vaccine being developed by Genentech and the National Cancer Institute.

Genentech, already licensed to use the technology, is a genetically engineered, naturally occurring immune system signalling molecule.

It stimulates the body to destroy abnormal cancer cells. The vaccine alerts the immune system to the presence of a specific type of cancer, a protein called p53, which is a common solid tumor suppressor gene.

It is being tested in non-small cell lung cancer, of which there are an estimated 150,000 new cases in North America each year.

The vaccine is being tested in a phase I trial, which will determine if it is safe and if it can stimulate the immune system to fight cancer.

The vaccine is being tested in a phase I trial, which will determine if it is safe and if it can stimulate the immune system to fight cancer.

U.N. envoy asks neighbours to implement arms embargo on Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — U.N. special envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, said Friday the Afghan conflict would end if its neighbours agreed to stop arming its warring factions.

Mr. Brahimi said that Afghanistan's neighbours have a "very, very big responsibility" in ending the Afghan conflict, and "arms cannot go into Afghanistan except through the land and air space of these countries."

The Algerian diplomat, who held talks with Pakistani officials in Islamabad and the religious Taliban militia leaders in Kabul, is leaving for Tehran Saturday for discussions aimed at restoring peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Brahimi said the United Nations was also in close contact with U.S. envoy Bill Richardson, who is to visit Kabul on April 17.

"There is very close coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and the countries that are interested in Afghanistan and definitely the United States is one of them," he said.

U.S. officials said Washington was promoting a formula agreed at the United Nations last month by Afghanistan's six neighbours plus the United States and Russia, providing for a broad-based government and respect for human rights.

Mr. Brahimi said the United Nations had been telling the neighbouring states that "if you want an arms embargo, you have got to talk to one another and agree on how to cooperate to make it work."

Without such cooperation, the calls for an arms embargo would be nothing more than slogans, he said, arguing that the Afghans would move towards peace if the flow of arms was stopped.

Mr. Brahimi specifically mentioned Iran and Pakistan as "very important" neighbours, having "close connections" with rival groups. "They are not hiding their interest in Afghanistan," he said.

The two countries can play an important role in this matter, he said.

Top leaders of the two countries discussed "very seriously" the Afghan issue during an Islamic summit in Tehran in December, which led to an agreement among the warring groups to initiate dialogue.

The U.N. envoy hoped a proposed steering committee comprising representatives of the Taliban militia and their rival northern alliance would meet in Islamabad next week to bring an end to the Afghan war.

The committee will work for convening a meeting of Ulama (Muslim clerics) from both sides to discuss ways to end the bloodshed.

Mr. Brahimi said he was optimistic the Ulama commission would take practical steps for a ceasefire and an embargo on arms to warring groups.

He said it was agreed the conflict had lingered "too long," and the countries of the region should understand its negative effects abroad.

Donor countries are unhappy as aid cannot be distributed without proper security, Mr. Brahimi said, stressing that peace in Afghanistan would open the way for oil, gas and energy projects and create thousands of jobs.

But if the war continued, there was danger of its spilling over, he said.

Mr. Brahimi said he discussed with Taliban ruling council chief Mullah Muhammad Rabbani the difficulties faced by U.N. aid workers in the two-thirds of Afghanistan under Taliban control.

"Some organisations are thinking of closing their shops," he said, adding that Mullah Rabbani understood it was the Taliban's duty to help U.N. agencies carry out their humanitarian work.

But Mr. Brahimi said problems are more serious in the northern region held by the opposition. The United Nations had been forced to close its offices in Mazar-i-Sharif because "we are having very serious security problems in the north" of the country.

He said a U.N. delegation would visit Kabul soon to further discuss the issue with Taliban officials.



Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto leaves Sind provincial high court after appearing before a special accountability court on charges of illegal recruitments in various organisations during her regime. The court allowed her today to go abroad. Her government was dismissed in 1996 by the then president Farooq Laghari on corruption charges (Reuters photo)

Pakistani court exempts Bhutto from appearing in graft case

KARACHI (AFP) — A Pakistani court Friday exempted former Premier Benazir Bhutto from attending court in person in a case of administrative corruption against her, officials said.

Ms. Bhutto, who appeared in response to an earlier arrest warrant, pleaded that she wanted to go abroad to consult lawyers and to deliver lectures in the United States and Canada.

Accepting her plea, Justice Ghous Mohammad of the Sindh High Court observed: "Every accused has a right to consult lawyer, therefore this right is granted."

The hearing of the case was fixed for April 24. But it will be delayed until her return on May 9.

Ms. Bhutto, 44, arrived at the court with party colleagues amid tight security and slogan-shouting by her supporters.

The court last month summoned her in a case filed by a government-appointed Accountability Commissioner.

The former premier along with ex-officials of national carrier Pakistan International Airlines were blamed for bypassing rules in postings and recruitments in the airline.

Ms. Bhutto was sacked in November 1996, charged with misrule and corruption during her three years at the helm. She has denied the charges, calling it an act of political victimisation.

"This is no crime to provide employment to unemployed youths. They were not known to me," she said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has also given jobs to his "cronies," she alleged, while tailing to reporters.

"They have involved me in this case because they do not want me to defend myself and my husband in European countries," Ms. Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari, who was minister for investment in her cabinet, is in jail facing several criminal cases.

"They do not want to give my right to unfettered defence and to express my political views freely," the opposition leader said.

The government said Ms. Bhutto's bank accounts in Europe had been frozen as the money was allegedly looted by her family members during her rule.

Ms. Bhutto is to leave for London soon to "consult" lawyers before going on a lecture tour of the United States and Canada.

Indonesians make bid for asylum at embassies in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — A rag-tag group of 35 Indonesian immigrants broke into the U.S. embassy and three other diplomatic compounds here Friday in a desperate bid to seek political asylum, officials said.

But most of the frail, poorly-dressed immigrants from Indonesia's troubled Aceh province were swiftly rounded up and handed over to Malaysian security forces.

It was thought the event had been coordinated with the help of people sympathetic to the group's plight, although police could not give details.

Eight who scaled a two-metre wall to get into the U.S. mission were detained by the embassy security and were "being interrogated by our political section," a U.S. official told AFP.

But 20 Acehnese who burst into the French and Swiss embassies and seven others who entered the nearby Sharif Ali Palace, a rest house for senior Brunei officers, were arrested by Malaysian police.

A French source said Malaysian security forces were asked to enter the diplomatic grounds and arrest the asylum seekers after four dashed through the gates, and four others jumped over the compound's walls.

"About 40 personnel from the Federal Reserve Unit entered the compound and detained them. There were some scuffles initially but the illegals gave in," he said.

"They were dressed in clothes akin to a construction worker. They looked weak and their frail bodies were no match to put up any resistance when the police came in to arrest the illegals in the French embassy," another French source said.

One of the group had lifted a stone to prevent arrest but gave up while the rest could only just "stare into the eyes of the riot police who were armed with batons."

Bernama news agency quoted Bakri Zinin, Cheras police chief, as saying the Swiss and the Brunei embassy officials had also requested police assistance to evict the illegals.

Acehnese immigrants have been fighting their deportation back to Indonesia, as part of a crackdown by Malaysian authorities, arguing they face reprisals if they return.

But the Indonesian military has denied the claims, even though 500 were held for questioning after being deported for interrogation about their links to an outlawed Aceh separatist group.

The U.S. spokeswoman said the embassy was in contact with officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) here.

"They are seeking asylum status. The embassy is working with the UNHCR to verify their positions," she said. "We will not hand them to the police ... not yet."

The eight were being given food by the U.S. embassy, and one who had head wounds was being treated by medical staff, the spokeswoman said, adding the embassy was closed to normal activities.

An AFP photographer at the U.S. embassy said about 50 riot police who had earlier secured the perimeter wall of the embassy had been withdrawn.

But there were protests that other embassies had turned over the asylum-seekers.

One Western diplomat, expressing disgust at the move, said it appeared the illegals were desperate to avoid deportation.

"The bottom-line for us is if somebody comes in and asks for asylum, we have to look into their case. We certainly won't evict them," the diplomat said.

They must be desperate. Their action to break into a foreign embassy is an abnormal action. It is an act of someone who is desperate," he said.

Malaysia, which has deported thousands of illegal immigrants, has been criticised by human rights groups for not discriminating between economic and political migrants.

Aceh separatists have been fighting a low-level insurgency for independence from Indonesia in the devoutly Muslim region since the mid-1970s.

Fourteen illegal Indonesians have been held up at the UNHCR office seeking political asylum since March 30, when they crashed a truck through the compound gates.

They were among 247 inmates who escaped from the Lenggeng camp in Negeri Sembilan following bloody riots as they resisted deportation. It was not immediately known if Friday's group were from those who had managed to evade arrest.

Malaysian authorities have insisted the groups are economic migrants fleeing Indonesia's financial turmoil and not political refugees.

Veteran negotiator to lead North Korean team to inter-Korean talks

BEIJING (AFP) — Veteran negotiator Jon Kum-Chol will lead the North Korean delegation to landmark inter-Korean talks in the Chinese capital this weekend, a spokesman said here Friday.

"The North informed us today that Jon will head a 5-member delegation to the deputy ministerial talks here," the South Korean spokesman told AFP.

"The North also suggested that the meeting take place at 3 p.m. (0700 GMT) instead of the previously set 10 a.m. (0200 GMT) Saturday," he said.

North Koreans did not give any reasons for the delay. Mr. Jon, a senior administrator who has long been in charge of inter-Korean dialogue, led the successful 1995 talks with the South, which resulted in the South's supply of 150,000 tonnes of free rice to the North.

After three years and nine months of hiatus, Pyongyang proposed the government-to-government talks last week to discuss the South's supply of fertiliser to the famine-stricken North and "other matters of mutual concern."

Mr. Jon's counterpart, deputy Unification Minister Jeong Se-Hyun, said top priority at the talks would be to try and arrange contact and reunions with tens of thousands of South Koreans cut-off for almost half a century from their loved ones in the reclusive North.

He also held out the hope that the meeting could lead to a continuing round of government-to-government talks, though he predicted the first round would not produce much, and not go beyond Tuesday at the latest.

After a historic summit between the two Koreas fell through after the sudden death of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung, Pyongyang has refused government-level talks with Seoul, using the Red Cross channel to obtain food aid from the South.

The North's proposal for the resumption of official talks came less than two months after South Korea's new President Kim Dae Jung took office.

Mr. Kohl, who in the previous edition of Focus had voiced annoyance at what he described as interference from Brussels in issues that could be better handled locally.

Mr. Stoiber's thinly-veiled sniping at Mr. Kohl comes amid a general jockeying for position by German political parties prior to legislative elections in September.

The opposition Social-Democrat Party (SPD) is currently leading the opinion polls, but party chief Oskar Lafontaine warned against complacency in another interview to appear Saturday.

Mr. Lafontaine recalled that the SPD had been riding similarly high in the polls when it lost elections in 1994.

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Residents of Concord, Alabama, look for personal belongings after a tornado struck killing at least thirty-seven people in Alabama and Georgia. The devastating storms that struck Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi are the latest in what has become the deadliest U.S. tornado season in 14 years (Reuters photo)

U.S. tornado death toll rises to 43

WASHINGTON (AFP) — At least 43 people were killed and more than 200 were injured in tornadoes that ripped through Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia, authorities said.

The twisters hit between late Thursday and early Friday, killing 32 people in Alabama, 10 in Georgia and one in Mississippi. Some 2,000 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed.

Experts estimated that one tornado that left a 32 kilometre path of destruction near Birmingham, Alabama, registered the highest level, F5, on the so-called Fujita scale. This means it developed winds of over 416 kilometres per hour.

Alabama Governor Fob James said the tornadoes were the worst ever to hit the state.

Rescue crews were combing through rubble Friday in search of victims.

Vice President Al Gore and Federal Emergency Administration chief James Lee Wirt were expected to visit the areas of devastation in Alabama and Georgia later Friday.

President Bill Clinton Thursday announced disaster relief for the hardest-hit areas.

"You can see how awful it has been," Mr. Clinton said of the television footage showing the destruction. "It's quite amazing. I hope you will all say a prayer for those folks tonight."

"It's a tragedy of tragedies," he said.

Music goes to war in a plea for humanity

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In order to raise more awareness of the plight of civilians trapped in the conflicts in Africa the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) initiated a book entitled *Woza Africa!* Music goes to war, published at the end of 1997.

The book is a plea for the closer observance of international humanitarian law. Thousands of copies are being distributed by the ICRC to all civilian and military authorities on the African continent.

The book illustrates the plight of victims of civil war in various parts of Africa, through pictures taken by renowned photographers.

In introducing *Woza Africa*, South African President Nelson Mandela writes in the foreword that among the challenges faced by the African continent today is "...giving free reign to her people's intellectual, cultural, economic and political enterprise."

President Mandela, who spent 22 years in Robben Island Prison and was visited by the ICRC, stressed the importance of "creating an environment in which democracy, tolerance, human rights and justice find expression under the African sun."

Woza Africa is a continuation of the "So Why?" campaign, launched in Africa in October last year. This campaign entailed the production of

an album, book, and television documentary.

The album is the culmination of the efforts of six of the continent's most popular artists who went on a trip to the worst-affected regions in Africa with ICRC representatives. The artists met with war victims in Natal, Liberia, southern Sudan and Angola.

Consequently, the title song expresses the emotion they felt after meeting these war victims. The aim of the campaign was combating ethnic discrimination in Africa and promoting the respect for victims of war and political violence.

"This is urgent at a time when a number of countries are in the throes of war, suffering from 'ethnic cleansing,' mass deportation and when countless families are being torn apart." — mission statement

The album has been aired over more than 90 African and international radio stations, including the BBC World Service, Radio France International, and Voice of America. It will be aired on Radio Jordan's English Service in May to commemorate the International Day for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

"This [campaign] is urgent at a time when a number of countries are in the throes of war, suffering from 'ethnic cleansing,' mass deportation and when countless families are being torn apart." — mission statement

WOZA AFRICA!

Music goes to War



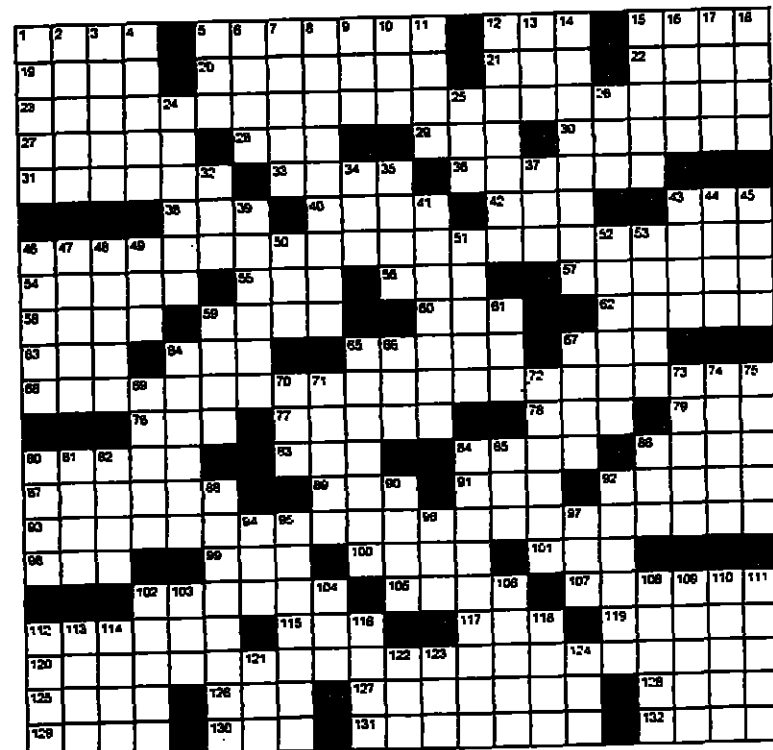
Foreword by Nelson Mandela

The Saturday Crossword

1997 HEADLINES

By Stanley B. Whitten, Northbrook, Illinois

- ACROSS
- 1 Sour
 - 2 Start again from scratch
 - 12 Small amount
 - 15 Deeply absorbed
 - 19 Toward sunset
 - 20 Justice Sandra Day
 - 21 Goal
 - 22 Lotion ingredient, often
 - 23 1997 sports headline
 - 27 Writer Loos
 - 28 French born
 - 29 Vigor
 - 30 Insects
 - 31 Send again
 - 32 Nancy the detective
 - 36 Titled
 - 38 Black or White
 - 40 Distillate
 - 42 S. to Cato
 - 43 Onset of rain?
 - 46 1997 sports headline
 - 54 "Fargo" director
 - 55 Coop resident
 - 56 Mineral spring
 - 57 Serengeti predators
 - 58 Light gas
 - 59 Priestly robes
 - 60 Gabor sister
 - 62 Two under par
 - 63 Flop
 - 64 Neighbor of Ga.
 - 65 Scooped
 - 67 Hodges of baseball
 - 68 1997 science headline



- DOWN
- 1 Crimean resident
 - 2 Skin type
 - 3 PHibin of TV
 - 4 Grim exposure
 - 5 Drive a dinghy
 - 6 S subject
 - 7 Voiced disapproval
 - 8 Supports below
 - 9 Elected ones
 - 10 Base
 - 11 Falset problem
 - 12 Plunder
 - 13 Provide weapons
 - 14 Saily
 - 15 Gave a score
 - 16 Baldwin brother
 - 17 Barrel
 - 18 Hardy heroine
 - 24 Dried grape
 - 25 Unused
 - 26 Female
 - 28 Ballpoint, e.g.
 - 34 Long time
 - 35 Astounds
 - 37 Shed
 - 39 Masonry block
 - 41 Suspended cable
 - 43 ...pong
 - 44 Actual
 - 45 Being Lat.
 - 46 Repairs
 - 47 Enjoyed avidly
 - 48 Valerie Harper sitcom

- 49 Computer syst.
- 50 Internet
- 51 Post's bird
- 52 Observing
- 53 Kingdom
- 54 Swiss mountains
- 55 Supplement
- 56 Tributary stream
- 57 Down on the market?
- 58 Ancient
- 59 USNA mascot
- 60 Ascend
- 61 Sphre
- 62 Noddies units
- 63 Timing signal
- 64 Excuse
- 65 Long gun
- 66 Catlike
- 67 Monumental entrance
- 68 Little legumes
- 69 Grel or Moss
- 70 California Island
- 71 Strange
- 72 Conifer
- 73 Tax-time documentation
- 74 Blunder
- 75 South China Sea
- 76 Sultanate
- 77 Unmeaker's cry
- 78 Baby cells
- 79 Employ
- 80 Serve perfectly

- Last Sunday's Crossword Solved
- 102 Pocket breads
 - 103 Fighting Tigris of the NCAA
 - 104 Booser
 - 105 Lone Ranger's sidekick
 - 106 Hawaiian ciao
 - 107 Lawn leveler
 - 108 60s creative movement
 - 109 Spits apart
 - 110 Venomous vipers
 - 111 Emblem
 - 112 Chipper
 - 113 Greek peak
 - 114 British gun
 - 115 Zodiac sign
 - 116 Wham
 - 117 Pay attachment?
 - 118 CIA predecessor

Israeli Arabs march home, to a place they can't live in

By Serge Schmemann

SHEIKH DANNUN, Israel — Viewed from a distance through the thick haze of a sandstorm, the marchers with their upheld sheets of red and green paper seemed to merge with the flowering fields of the Galilee.

As they approached, their chants became audible: "The Right of Return Is Inalienable!" "Land Day Lives On!" And it became evident that each sheet of paper carried Arabic lettering. There were 418 sheets, a marcher said, one for each Arab village that stood among these and similar fields 50 years ago, before being levelled by the Jewish soldiers of the new State of Israel.

About the time of the march, Palestinians protesting the presence of Jewish settlers near Nablus, in the Samaritan hills of the West Bank, clashed with Israeli police officers, who opened fire with rubber-coated bullets.

The thousand Arabs walking out of Sheikh Dannun were not West Bank Palestinians, for whom the Israeli settlers and soldiers were occupiers and interlopers. The marchers were Israeli citizens, most fluent in Hebrew, and they marched with a permit from police, who were mainly there to handle traffic. Yet their red, green, black and white flags were also Palestinian, although their grievance differed largely in its vintage from those of West Bank Palestinians.

The march was called to mark what the Israeli Arabs call Land Day, March 30, the anniversary of the day 22 years ago when Israeli forces opened fire on Israeli Arabs protesting the expropriation of their lands, killing six.

This year, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, the commemoration had a special significance: to begin events to mark Al Nakbeh, or the Disaster — the defeat and dispossession of the Palestinian Arabs in 1948. Israeli Arab leaders called for a general strike, and on May 15, major commemorations.

A few miles north of Sheikh Dannun, the column turned onto a dirt road that led through wheat fields

into a wood, with thick hedges of cactus among the pines. This was a sure sign that an Arab village had once stood here: the cactus fenced a corral. The ruin of a mosque, surrounded by a high fence topped with barbed wire, soon came into view, and the chants gave way to the Palestinian anthem, "Biladi, Biladi" — "My Country, My Country."

As the speeches began, Hamad Ali, a 62-year-old construction worker from Sheikh Dannun, walked to the edge of the crowd and pointed to a large tree among the weeds and hillocks. "I was born here," he said in Hebrew. "My parents' house stood there, by the tree. The mosque was the centre. There was a bakery over here, two meat shops. My family lived off the land — they had some cows, sheep, grew some wheat."

The village was called Gabsiyeh, and it was apparently much like the other 900 villages in which the majority of Palestinian Arabs, then estimated to number 1.2 million, lived in 1948. About 700 people lived here.

Ali interrupted his story for a minute of silent prayer called for those killed during the 1948 civil war. "We ran away and hid in caves," he resumed. "We were afraid they'd kill us. I heard there was a young man who climbed on the mosque with a white flag to surrender, and they shot him."

True or not, there were many similar stories. But unlike tens of thousands of other Arabs, who fled into Arab-held territories to the north and east, the villagers of Gabsiyeh returned to their homes.

"The officers came back in 1951," Ali said. "It was winter. I remember because it was the first snow I ever saw. A few Jewish officers came. They said the army were going to hold manoeuvres, and it was safer for us to leave. My poor parents believed them and obeyed. Nobody was ever allowed back. Those who came back were arrested. I was 14."

The villagers appealed to the high court, which ordered the military administration to let them return. Instead the army levelled the village, leaving only the

mosque to crumble slowly among the cactuses.

Ali's story has countless echoes among the millions of Palestinian Arabs. Their continued existence as refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and neighbouring Arab countries remains one of the major hurdles to a final peace settlement, and a troubling shadow over Israel to many of its citizens.

The people who marched Saturday are what the Israeli novelist David Grossman called present absentees — an ironic play on the fact that the Israeli government seized some Arab properties in the early years on the ground that their owners were absentee landlords.

According to Israeli statistics, about 136,000 Palestinian Arabs were left in Israel in November 1948. Their numbers have surpassed one million, almost a fifth of the population. They hold Israeli citizenship and elect representatives but do not serve in the army. They proportionately receive a much smaller share of state money than Jews for schooling and other services, but most are aware that their plight is better than that of other Palestinians.

"My life is good," acknowledged Yusef Mahmoud Salem, 38, whose father had been a major landowner in Gabsiyeh. "I'm a Palestinian, and I'm a citizen of Israel. I think Israel should be a country for all its citizens."

Ali agreed. He had no complaint with being Israeli, but he wanted his land back.

"We were born here, and we want to live here," he said. "I don't care who's in charge. As we say, the man married to my mother is my father."

Police arrested one of two youths who had somehow climbed onto the mosque's dome to put up a flag. In the West Bank, that would have triggered a wave of stones, but here, the youth was just told to leave until his lawyer arrived.

"They say this is private property," he said sullenly. "I don't want to get in trouble with police. But this is our mosque. How can it be private property?"

Israel pressed to continue reforms

WASHINGTON (R) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made great strides in reforming Israel's economy but the process is slowing growth, U.S. undersecretary of state, Stuart Eizenstat, has said.

Mr. Eizenstat released a report by a prominent U.S.-Israel advisory group he chairs that strongly endorsed reforms pursued by Mr. Netanyahu.

But the group also urged that Israel go even further in cutting taxes, inflation and spending and selling controlling stakes in strategic industries like telecommunications.

The U.S.-Israel Joint Economic Development Group is an advisory body established in the mid-1980s to discuss Israeli economic policy. The U.S. goal is to promote market-oriented measures that enhance the absorption of immigrants in Israel through private-sector job creation.

Its recommendations are normally private, but Mr. Eizenstat said he went public in the hope of building support for further reforms among the Israeli public and decision-makers.

"The Netanyahu government has made tremendous strides economically

and a lot of the recommendations that we have made are recommendations they are already beginning to implement," Mr. Eizenstat told reporters.

No country emerging from a colonial past has accomplished as much economically as Israel and it now "stands at the cusp ... of developed country status," he said.

Despite this, Israel's economy is not performing as well as it was a few months ago and this is manifested in lower growth, stagnant per capita income and rising unemployment, he said.

"The impasse in the (Israeli-Palestinian) peace process is a major element in the current difficulties Israel is having," with tourism revenue down dramatically, he said, adding that foreign investment, although now robust, "may also suffer."

Israel, the closest U.S. ally in the Middle East, receives \$3 billion annually in U.S. aid. But Mr. Eizenstat stressed the group's proposals were advisory and that it did not attempt to dictate Israeli economic policy.

The group said that in 1999 Israel should try to "reduce the budget deficit to two per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

reduce spending by 0.5 per cent of GDP and reduce the tax burden," which was 39.7 per cent of GDP in 1996, to 38 per cent of GDP.

The government budget should shrink to 45 per cent of GDP by the year 2000 and the budget deficit to 1.5 per cent of GDP by 2001, it said.

Deficit targets should be achieved by spending cuts not tax increases and government employment should be reduced, it said.

Mr. Eizenstat particularly hailed Israel's success at curbing inflation, which in 1985 was between 400 and 800 per cent and which many people doubted could ever be reined in.

He said Israel should reduce its 1998 inflation target from 7-10 per cent to 5-8 per cent and aim for 4-7 per cent in 1999.

He stressed the need for Israel to ensure its central bank is free from political pressure and emphasised price stability as its main mission — a key attraction for foreign investors.

Israel should also decide a specific number of companies to be transferred to private control, the report said.

transportation, financial services, construction and chemicals," it said.

The group proposed selling a controlling stake in El Al, the national airline, Bezeq, the national telephone company, and at least one of two banks, Bank Discount and Bank Leumi.

It recommended divesting fully the government's remaining stakes in Israel Chemicals and Zim, a shipping line.

It also proposed selling Israel's stakes in Afridar Building and Development Company, Lod-Ramle Regional Development Corporation, Weed Control Company, Industrial Development Bank, Israel Foreign Trade Risk Insurance Company and Israel Building Centre.

Israel should also privatise at least one of the two branches of the Oil Refineries Corporation by 1999, it said.

It should implement planned foreign exchange reforms with a view toward full convertibility by 2001, liberalise trade and open financial services further to foreign and domestic competition, the report added.

Indonesia announces sweeping reform

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia announced a sweeping reform package on Friday aimed at ending the worst economic crisis in decades in the huge Asian nation and set target dates to implement all key points.

"If this programme is implemented seriously and fully, we believe our economy will gradually improve," coordinating minister for the economy, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, said in a statement while announcing the package.

It was the third such agreement on reforms with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in less than six months and economic analysts said the implementation rather than the contents of the package would be key to the country's recovery.

The 117-point reform programme, agreed after more than three weeks of talks with the IMF, promises a new anti-monopoly law by the end of the year, moves to set up a bankruptcy law and a special bankruptcy court by April 22 and

regulations for winding up of companies, mergers and acquisitions by the end of September.

The government also said it would end a ban on the export of palm oil by April 22 and replace it with a tax of not more than 40 per cent. It drew up a concrete programme for privatisation of state enterprises and accelerated restructuring of the battered banking sector.

The package, called a memorandum of economic and financial policies, also provided the sketch of a framework to resolve the \$74 billion in private foreign debt, one of the key problems bedevilling the Indonesian economy since the plunge in the rupiah from July last year.

Analysts reacted cautiously to the package, saying that while it was a step in the right direction, they needed to be convinced that the government was serious about implementation.

OECD cuts '98 growth forecast due to Japan troubles

PARIS (AFP) — The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has cut its economic growth forecast for industrial countries in 1998 to 2.4 per cent from a December forecast of 2.5 per cent, largely due to Japan's economic woes, aggravated by the Asian crisis.

But industrial countries apart from Japan are seen weathering the fallout of the Asian crisis better than was expected at the end of last year, the OECD said in its twice-yearly Economic Outlook report.

"Overall, we maintain more optimism as far as the OECD area is concerned," Ignazio Visco, head of the OECD economics department, told a news conference.

The OECD now expects Japan's economy to shrink by 0.3 per cent this year, compared with a December forecast of 0.5 per cent growth and 1997 growth of 0.9 per cent.

"Japan's economy is on

the edge of recession... the already poor economic situation as well as the existing weakness of the financial system have been aggravated by the Asia crisis," the report said.

It urged the government to include permanent tax cuts in any fiscal stimulus package, as this would give it "a greater chance of success."

While financial and exchange market tensions in Asia eased in the first quarter of this year, "the situation in the region remains fragile" and Asian countries' efforts to adjust their economies will have a "significant" effect on the OECD as a whole, the report said.

Japan will return to growth next year, with gross domestic product (GDP) forecast to rise 1.3 per cent, while South Korea, the only other Asian OECD member, is expected to see its economy shrink 0.2 per cent this year before recovering

to GDP growth of 4.0 per cent in 1999 after showing 5.5 per cent growth in 1997.

The OECD said the Asia crisis will trim 0.5 per cent off potential OECD growth this year and 0.3 per cent next year, excluding South Korea. If South Korea is included, the crisis will trim 0.7 per cent off potential growth this year and 0.4 per cent in 1999.

"Nevertheless growth prospects for 1998-99 remain relatively favourable for the OECD area as a whole," with GDP growth of 2.4 per cent in 1998 and 2.5 per cent in 1999, down from 3.1 per cent in 1997, the OECD said.

In most OECD countries outside Asia, the underlying economic situation is generally more positive than expected earlier, it added.

Inflation is forecast to remain low, at 3.4 per cent for OECD countries overall in 1998, and 3.1 per

cent in 1999, down from 3.7 per cent in 1997.

Unemployment is also seen falling slightly, to 7.1 per cent in 1998 and 7.0 per cent in 1999 from 7.2 per cent in 1997.

The OECD said the U.S. economy is expected to grow 2.7 per cent in 1998 and 2.1 per cent in 1999, with the Asian crisis helping to curb the risk of the economy overheating and reducing the need to raise interest rates.

"The weakening of U.S. exports, together with the effects of dollar appreciation on import prices, has reduced the need for increases in policy-controlled interest rates," the report said.

But it warned that inflation pressures could emerge "as soon as the situation stabilises in Asia and temporary factors contributing to the present favourable outlook wear off."

In the European Union (EU), where economic growth is forecast at 2.7

per cent in 1998 and 2.8 per cent in 1999, "the situation has been improving," the report said.

"Growth has slowed to sustainable rates in some of the countries that risked overheating, while in most countries in the prospective euro area, the recovery seems to have become more broadly based, with domestic demand finally picking up."

But it reiterated concern that EU countries taking part in the launch of the euro next year must take action to make their labour markets more flexible and reduce unemployment if the single currency is to be a success.

The report forecast the EU unemployment rate to fall to 10.9 per cent this year and 10.5 per cent in 1999 from 11.2 per cent in 1997, but EU countries remain virtually the only OECD members with double-digit unemployment rates.

The exception is Poland, with unemployment forecast at 2.7

per cent in 1998 and 2.8 per cent in 1999.

The OECD also said that euro countries must reduce their public deficits below the 3 per cent of GDP level achieved to qualify for the euro launch, to "ensure that fiscal positions are maintained on a sustainable path over the longer term."

The OECD mid-year report is not normally released until June, but there were problems in December because by the time the report was published the figures had been overtaken by renewed chaos in Asia and officials had to give selected revisions to the printed forecasts.

The figures in this report were completed in late March. A fuller version of the report will be published at the end of May.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're embroiled in a controversy, but don't worry. You're learning a lot from each other. Your position doesn't need defending. The best parts will be obvious to everyone, and the worst parts can be easily abandoned.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your nerves may be just about frazzled by now. It feels like other people are running the show, and they're not anywhere near as good at it as you'd like them to be. Don't let the person who's talking the loudest take control of the situation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Everybody wants your time and attention. Unfortunately, you have the trouble deciding which offer to accept. Go with the artist or poet. The intellectual type is a better match for you right now than the athlete. Choose brains over brawn.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) A domestic gathering could turn into a free-for-all if you're not careful. You may find yourself playing the referee. That's an unfortunate position to be in, since you have strong feelings about everything, too.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Continue to gather information and practise the skills you need to convince others to do things your way. Right now, it's easier for you to learn and travel. Trying to do them both at the same time may be a little bit complicated, however.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your main worries have to do with money. Even if you have enough, you'll think of some reason to worry. So don't be surprised if this happens while you're out shopping today. Just acknowledge it and get on about your business.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're right in the middle of a debate, but you can hold your own against the most outrageous opinion. Your skill is in opening people's minds up a little. You don't tell them they're wrong, actually. You just don't support their paranoia.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) People are interested in what you know. You're carefully protecting your resources, of course, but you could let a little more of the data into circulation. It's not really gossip if you're trying to clear up confusion, rather than generate it.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You want to go out, and your roommates or family want stay home. That's OK, if you're just going for a little while. If you plan to be gone all weekend, however, tensions could develop. Just get home as soon as possible.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You'd like to stay home in bed all day, but it looks like you'll have to travel instead. You're being summoned by an older person, possibly a parent. Don't worry. This isn't going to be as bad as you think.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's a lot on your plate today, but you're up for a challenge. Use technology to your advantage. If you've got a laptop computer, for example, you can check your e-mail even if you're far from home.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) It will be smarter to bring money into your account than to buy an expensive luxury item. The temptation to do the latter is going to be fierce, however. Hold off until tomorrow; you'll have a little more common sense then.

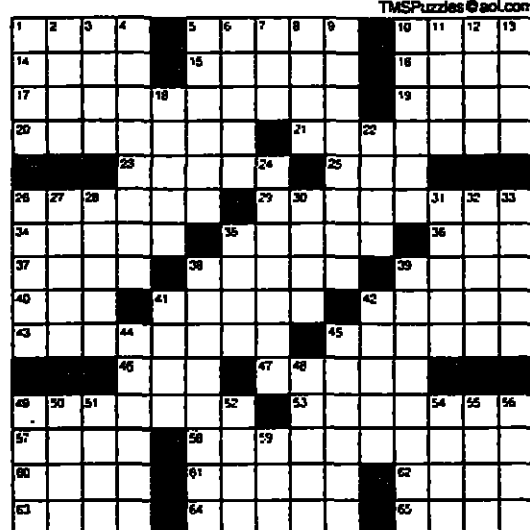
Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

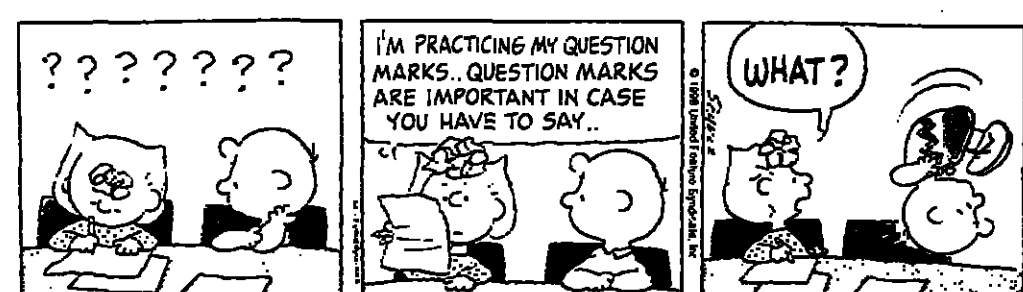
- Indian housemaid
- Pat protection; grp.
- Sleuth Charlie
- Bert's ex
- out (parentheses)
- Bonheur or Parks
- Capt. John Smith's friend
- Copcat
- Jackie or James
- Ottawa chief
- Countertop
- Caviar base
- Lipinski's footwear
- Matrix of computer networks
- Ness and Lombard
- Curved moldings
- Beer type
- Operatic solo
- Dogpatch resident
- monster
- Actor Beatty
- Woman's neckline cap
- Absolutely not!
- Fuel measuring device
- Alluring women
- French friend
- With 28D.
- protein bases
- Chiriquia
- Apache chief
- Fitness
- Translucent gem
- Chief Metacum, aka
- Stuck in the mud
- With 51D.
- "Flashdance" star
- South of France
- Teddy
- Excuse
- Drying kiln



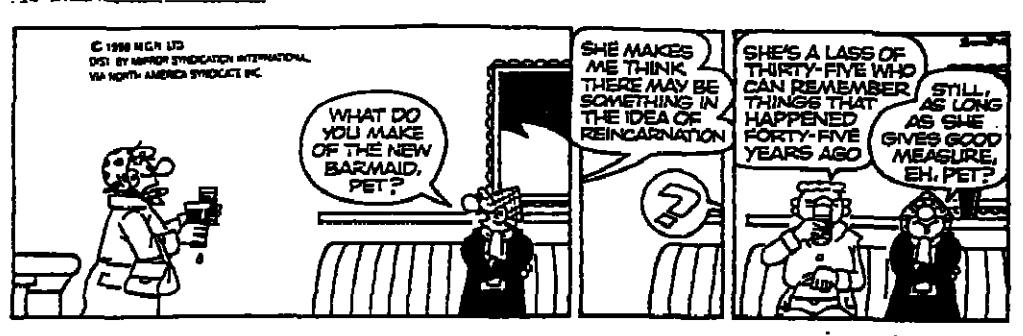
DOWN

- Swiss range
- Debatable
- Deliver ending?
- Onondaga chief
- Scrubs, as a mission
- Domingo
- Alyssa
- Applaud
- Classifier
- Lunar depression
- Pueblo dweller
- On the briny
- Drug cop
- Alan and others
- Negatives
- Milano Mrs.
- Coloquialism
- peninsula
- See 47A
- Requirement
- Inexperienced
- Glasgow or Berlin
- Crocodile
- Hautboy
- Traction quality
- Apache leader
- Parlat. pref.
- Last inning
- Composer
- Gustav
- Winey-four participant
- Carta
- Hair splitter
- Mayberry boy
- See 61A
- Ireland
- Writer Kazan
- Caesar and
- Roasting rod
- Bird's bill

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

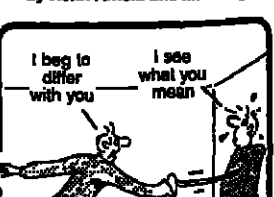


"This body wash is supposed to remove old skin cells. Will it remove enough to make me look thinner?"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TAFOO
ANSPLY
EMVOIT
TARGEY



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: HE THE (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: DROOP DOUSE HUNTER SAVORY
Answer: What the cowboys liked to do after work — HORSE AROUND

REUTERS The Busine

Major Currencies & Commodities

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6366	0.6933
DE Mark	0.6109	1.0000	0.4336
GB Sterling	1.4563	2.3636	1.0000
CHF Franc	0.6508	1.0337	0.4548
JP Yen	0.0078	1.1936	0.0054
CA Dollar	0.7019	1.1412	0.4922
IT Lira	0.0005	1.3667	0.0004
NL Guilder	0.0036	1.0361	0.0026
FR Franc	0.0065	1.3663	0.0047

Energy

Oil	Last	Revised
Brent	13.57	12.92
WTI	15.57	15.67
Bonny	13.27	12.92
Dubai	12.14	11.74
US Gas	1.00	0.92

Metal Prices

Metal	BSE	CME
Gold (oz's)	370.25	371.25
Silver (oz's)	6.45	6.42
Platinum (oz's)	426	429
AL (3 Months)	1426	1442
CU (3 Months)	1792	1776
Zinc (3 Months)	1142	1145
Lead (3 Months)	582	587
Ni (3 Months)	5270	5282

Commodity

Commodity	Last	Day
Coffee (lb's)	147.80	\$4
Cocoa (lb's)	1024	\$4
Sugar (lb's)	255.5	\$4
Wheat (lb's)	3	\$4
Soybeans (lb's)	29.03	\$4
Tea (lb's)	148	\$4
Barley (lb's)	0	\$4
Rice (lb's)	430	\$4

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Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Saturday, April 11, 1998 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Low incomes blamed for weak sales during 'Eid Al Adha holiday

AMMAN — Merchants in Amman complained of weak sales during the holiday of 'Eid Al Adha. They said sales volumes were even lower than the previous holiday of 'Eid Al Fitr, celebrated in February. Most merchants said the stores were crowded mainly with "window shoppers" amid calls for comparison shopping from one store to another.

The merchants attributed the weakness in the market to low incomes, competition from stores selling European goods and consumers restricting their purchases to only daily necessities.

According to William Safadi, owner of a trading store, the volume of sales was "very bad" compared to last year. He said the shortage of cash liquidity has caused a recession and a noticeable drop in sales. He went on to say that traders have lowered prices to stimulate sales which are sluggish for the most part of the year. "The per capita income does not correspond to the high cost of living," he stressed.

Samir Buteibet, a shop owner, described sales as low noting that a large number of consumers has already bought their requirements during the 'Eid Al Fitr and there was no possibility for another purchase. "Crowded markets do not mean any recovery for us," he said attributing his remark to high cost of living.

Another merchant, Odeh Dabeet, described the market as below the ordinary level despite low prices. He said a

number of traders were selling at a loss because of their need for cash liquidity. Jeweller Abdul Mueez Dahnous highlighted the suffering of many businessmen as a result of the recession which, he said, was unprecedented since the beginning of this year. "It is a drought year for all those who are in the (jewellery) business," he said.

Mohammed Jibril, owner of a store for baby clothes, said sales were blow the required level estimating it at 50 per cent less than the sales of the past season. He said that Jordanian consumers prefer to buy foreign products as local industries lack quality. Mr. Jibril described sales promotion as unfeasible because the consumers no longer trust such tactics. He favoured fixing a reasonable price with a specified profit margin.

Salah Baddawi, another merchant, agreed and emphasised that sales promotions were unrealistic and lacking objectivity. Mr. Baddawi said consumers want the good products and the cheapest prices and such a combination is difficult to achieve.

Ahmad Al Ashi said low incomes were the reason for recession and weak sales in addition to high production costs on imported goods which are also subjected to high customs tariffs. "The consumer has started to consider many products as luxury items because of the low incomes," Nafeth Harb, another merchant indicated (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Japan's central bank pulls out heavy artillery to prop up yen

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's central bank pulled out the heavy artillery Friday, spending billions of dollars propping up the yen as dealers shrugged off the largest stimulus spending plan in the country's history.

"The Bank of Japan went ahead with massive intervention," a dealer said, as the yen hit 127.40 to the dollar shortly after 3 p.m. (0600 GMT).

That meant the currency had jumped nearly six yen, or 4.3 per cent, in one day after it tumbled to 133.16 against the greenback when the 16 trillion yen (\$123 billion) spending package was unveiled. Dealers were disappointed the four trillion yen tax cuts announced were not permanent and that Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto insisted he would stick to his tightening policy of cutting Japan's huge deficit.

By late trade Friday the currency had slipped back and was quoted at 129.01-05 yen to the dollar in position covering ahead of the weekend.

But Tokyo signalled it was still ready to fight.

"We are ready to pull the trigger again when necessary as our gun is always loaded," Kyodo News agency quoted an international monetary source as saying.

One New York trader at Paribas estimated the Bank of Japan had poured a massive nine billion dollars into the market by early Friday.

A trader here said the figure was certainly "huge," and nine billion dollars "may be realistic."

Others noted the central bank could take advantage of thin trade during the Easter holidays, which closed many other currency markets in the world and gave extra weight to its intervention.

"In the past it has not been more than a couple of billion dollars," said Susumu Kato, an economist at Barclays Capital.

"It is a lot of money but I doubt it is much more than a couple of billion."

It is almost impossible to tell accurately on the day the amount of money the Bank of Japan spends buoying the currency, as it often tells dealers not to admit they are selling greenbacks for the central bank.

"Market players are relatively cool" to the spending plan, said Yutaka Miura at New Japan Securities Co. Ltd., who noted the details of the tax cuts were unclear.

Japanese share prices closed 0.3 per cent lower Friday with the key Nikkei stock average of falling 55.54 points to end at 16,481.12.

"Everyone will work out pretty quickly that the tax cuts will do little to help gross domestic product growth back into positive territory," said Garry Evans, strategist at HSBC Securities.

Overnight the U.S. Federal Reserve intervened in the market three times on behalf of Japan's central bank, arresting a rapid slide in the yen after Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto announced the tax cuts.

"It was a pretty effective intervention," said Evans.

"The Bank of Japan was thinking if they didn't step in then the market was heading for 135 or 140 yen (against the dollar) and that would set the new bottom level."

The joint U.S.-Japanese intervention was "obviously rare," said Ronald Bevacqua, economist at Merrill Lynch Japan.

"It signals that international pressure on Japan will temporarily wane. We don't know if the Americans are happy, probably they feel this is the best they could have expected from Japan."

Compounding Japan's woes, the government's economic planning agency said the economy was still in trouble, downgrading its assessment of the situation.

Analysts said even that was too optimistic.

"The economy remains stagnant and downward

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8211	0.5974	1.6131	128.74	1.4248	1788.70	2.0509	6.1052
DE Mark	0.5491	-	0.3278	0.8309	70.76	0.7822	987.37	1.1262	3.3821
GB Sterling	1.6740	3.0491	-	2.5333	215.76	2.3891	3011.02	3.4332	10.2201
CH Franc	0.9809	1.2027	0.3944	-	85.13	0.9410	1187.81	136.44	4.0317
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4140	0.4637	1.1749	-	1.1063	13.97	159.20	4.7393
CA Dollar	0.7019	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.11	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3255
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0117	0.3318	0.8841	139.58	0.7916	-	11.39	3.3816
NL Guilder	0.4876	0.8176	0.2911	0.7378	62.73	0.6548	377.38	-	2.3758
FR Franc	0.1638	0.2983	0.0978	0.2474	21.07	0.2334	33.58	33.5800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7503	0.3770	3.6410	0.3045	3.6729	1528.00	3.4160
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2896	0.5317	5.1354	0.4295	5.1804	2155.15	4.8191
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1891	-	0.1005	0.97	0.8912	0.98	407.43	0.9109
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8807	9.9483	-	9.56	0.8077	9.74	4053.27	9.0615
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0300	1.0300	-	0.0836	1.01	419.56	0.9382
Kuwait Dinar	3.2841	2.3284	12.3161	1.2380	11.98	-	12.06	5018.06	0.9382
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0126	0.9913	0.9829	-	416.02	0.9301
Lebanese 1000	0.85	0.4640	2.4544	0.2467	2.3829	0.1993	2.4037	-	2.2358
Egyptian	0.2927	0.2076	1.0979	0.1104	1.0659	0.0891	1.0752	447.31	-

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SA Riyal	AE Dirham	KW Dinar	BH Dinar
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7503	0.3770	3.6410	0.3045	3.6729	1528.00	3.4160
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2896	0.5317	5.1354	0.4295	5.1804	2155.15	4.8191
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Egyptian	0.2927	0.2076	1.0979	0.1104	1.0659	0.0891	1.0752	447.31	-

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last	Previous	Oil
Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI
WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent
Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI
WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent
Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI
WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent
Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI
WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent
Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI	15.67	15.67	Brent	13.27	12.82	WTI

Libor Fixing									
Period	1-1	1-3	1-6	1-12	Period	1-1	1-3	1-6	1-12
USD	5.6797	5.7266	5.7656	5.8516	USD	5.6797	5.7266	5.7656	5.8516
GBP	7.4635	7.5417	7.5313	7.6208	GBP	7.4635	7.5417	7.5313	7.6208
DEM	6.8979	6.7813	6.8021	6.8333	DEM	6.8979	6.7813	6.8021	6.8333
JPY	3.6187	3.7438	3.8888	4.0437	JPY	3.6187	3.7438	3.8888	4.0437
CHF	3.5313	3.6641	3.7813	3.9609	CHF	3.5313	3.6641	3.7813	3.9609
FRF	1.9000	1.8289	1.7248	1.5375	FRF	1.9000	1.8289	1.7248	1.5375
ITL	5.8420	5.2860	4.9000	-	ITL	5.8420	5.2860	4.9000	-

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	US Dollar	0.708	0.710	US Dollar	0.708	0.710	US Dollar
GB Sterling	1.1733	1.1782	GB Sterling	1.1733	1.1782	GB Sterling	1.1733	1.1782	GB Sterling
DE Mark	0.3825	0.3844	DE Mark	0.3825	0.3844	DE Mark	0.3825	0.3844	DE Mark
CH Franc	0.4633	0.4658	CH Franc	0.4633	0.4658	CH Franc	0.4633	0.4658	CH Franc
FR Franc	0.1142	0.1148	FR Franc	0.1142	0.1148	FR Franc	0.1142	0.1148	FR Franc
JP Yen	0.5241	0.5267	JP Yen	0.5241	0.5267	JP Yen	0.5241	0.5267	JP Yen
NL Guilder	0.3396	0.3413	NL Guilder	0.3396	0.3413	NL Guilder	0.3396	0.3413	NL Guilder
IT Lira	0.3881	0.39	IT Lira	0.3881	0.39	IT Lira	0.3881	0.39	IT Lira

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Jury awards \$7.85 million to woman who wanted to officiate in NBA

NEW YORK (AP) — Sandra Ortiz-Del Valle could jump. She could dribble. She could shoot and she could blow a whistle.

But she could not be a man. So, she argued, the U.S. National Basketball Association did not want her.

A jury has agreed, awarding her \$7.85 million.

Thursday's victory in U.S. District Court in Manhattan was bigger than any championship she had ever witnessed. It left her body shaking so uncontrollably she had to steady herself by leaning on a wall, then a window, and by tightly clutching a tiny New Testament in her palm.

"I can't believe they understood, because so many people didn't," Ortiz-Del Valle, 46, of New Jersey, said through her sobs after the verdict was returned following a week-long trial before Judge Sidney H.

Stein.

"We were kind of the underdogs. The NBA had five lawyers," said her attorney, Patricia Flannery, who also was crying as she and a few other supporters hooted and hollered as if the courthouse were a basketball court.

The jury, after two days of deliberations, agreed that the NBA discriminated against her. It awarded her \$100,000 for lost wages, \$750,000 for mental and emotional pain and \$7 million in punitive damages.

Chris Brienza, an NBA spokesman, said the league will ask the judge to set aside the verdict as the first step in an appeal.

Violet Palmer became the first woman to referee an NBA game when this season began in October. Less than a week later, the second woman, Dee Kantner, worked her

first game. The league said it approached both women about four years earlier because it believed they had the makings of NBA officials.

Recalling that she has loved basketball since she was a child in the projects of Harlem, Ortiz-Del Valle talked about her struggles as she and her lawyers shared tears and hugs for 20 minutes after the verdict.

She was refereeing in the Pro Am League, a league of 22 U.S. teams. By 1991, she was officiating in the U.S. Basketball League, which has teams from Maine to Florida on the East Coast.

"The players were always fine," she said. "They knew me from other leagues." From 1992 through 1994, she officiated preseason scrimmages for the New Jersey Nets and seemed at the league's doorstep.

She said she rose to No. 2 on the list of those in line to officiate in the NBA. Then she noticed that those ranked after her were being promoted to the league.

In court papers, the NBA said it observed Ortiz-Del Valle's performance as a referee for several years before concluding she did not qualify to officiate in the league.

The league said the level of competition she worked was far below that of the NBA. It said she repeatedly ignored its suggestions that she upgrade her schedule.

At first, Ortiz-Del Valle in the lawsuit asked to be installed as an NBA referee, but she has given up that request after injuring her back in a car accident a year ago.

"I couldn't trust people like that to be fair," she said, adding that "I would have been a damn good referee."

Tomba delays retirement decision

TOKYO (AFP) — Italian slalom star Alberto Tomba still needs a few weeks to decide whether to end his competitive alpine skiing career at the age of 31, a press report said Friday.

"I will reach a conclusion after considering the question for several weeks," Tomba was quoted as saying here by the Japanese sports daily Nihon Sports.

Tomba, who has won three Olympic gold medals but none at the Nagano Games last February, had been expected to quit racing at the end of the last World Cup season.

But he won the season's last slalom race in Crans Montana, Switzerland, on March 15 for his 50th World Cup victory. He said then it would take a few days to decide if he would retire from racing life.

"If I had lost in the race, it would be easy for me to decide on retiring. But because I won I am not yet able to reach a conclusion," said Tomba, who was visiting Japan to ski in an exhibition race with former Olympic and World Cup stars.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Seles in USA comeback

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Monica Seles, Mary Joe Fernandez and Lisa Raymond have been picked by new captain Billie Jean King to play alongside world number two Lindsay Davenport in the United States Fed Cup match with the Netherlands in a fortnight. The Dutch beat the Americans, without Davenport and Seles, in the first round last year on their way to the final they lost to France. Seles is making her return to the team with whom she won the Cup in 1996.

Ince slams United

MANCHESTER (AFP) — Liverpool and England midfielder star Paul Ince has claimed he was forced out of Manchester United after being treated like a piece of meat. Ince returns to United's Old Trafford ground for a vital Premiership match on Friday night that could see United go nine points clear at the top. Ince, who left United for Inter Milan in a 7 million deal three years ago before returning to England with Liverpool last season, said: "I never wanted to leave (United). I'd still be there if they had not decided to sell me. I maintain people behind the scenes were sticking the knife in," he is quoted as saying in The Sun newspaper. "For the first time in my life I realised footballers were just a piece of meat."

"United manager Alex Ferguson had players like Roy Keane and Nicky Butt he wanted to bring through and I could understand that, it was just the way the whole business was conducted. I do not believe it was all down to Ferguson. Other people at the club were involved but I won't name them. I still respect Fergie but I would love to deprive him of the Championship."

Graf delays comeback

MANNHEIM (AFP) — Former women's tennis world number one Steffi Graf has pulled out of Germany's Fed Cup team to play Spain in a fortnight. She is still not fully recovered from the groin injury she sustained at the Indian Wells tournament in California in March.

Prince Philip to attend World Cup

LONDON (AFP) — Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, will attend the World Cup opening match between Scotland and Brazil in Paris on June 10, his office said Thursday. Buckingham Palace would not rule out that other members of the royal family could go to France when the two British football teams who qualified for the World Cup, England and Scotland, face off against other squads. According to tabloid press reports, Prince William, 15, son of the late Diana, Princess of Wales and Prince Charles, would love to go to France.

Black cruises into Hong Kong semis

HONG KONG (AFP) — Zimbabwe's Byron Black continued his run of recent good form to breeze into the last four of the \$340,000 Hong Kong Open at Victoria Park here Friday.

Black, who last weekend defeated world number four Pat Rafter during Zimbabwe's Davis Cup win over Australia, brushed aside Italian seventh-seed Gianluca Pozzi to win 6-4, 6-0.

The 28-year-old from Harare said last week's win over Rafter had snapped him out of a form slump.

"Before last week I was in a bit of a slump," Black said. "When you go into a Davis Cup match you're not playing for yourself, you're playing for your country and all the adrenalin and team spirit snaps you out of it," he said. "Now I'm trying to make the most of my confidence."

Ranked 81st in the world, Black will face Canada's Sebastian Larue in the semi-finals Saturday. Larue beat Spain's Oscar Burrieza 6-1, 7-6 (7-4) to advance to the final four.

The other semi-final will be between Danish eighth seed Kenneth Carlsen and third seed Sweden's Thomas Johansson.

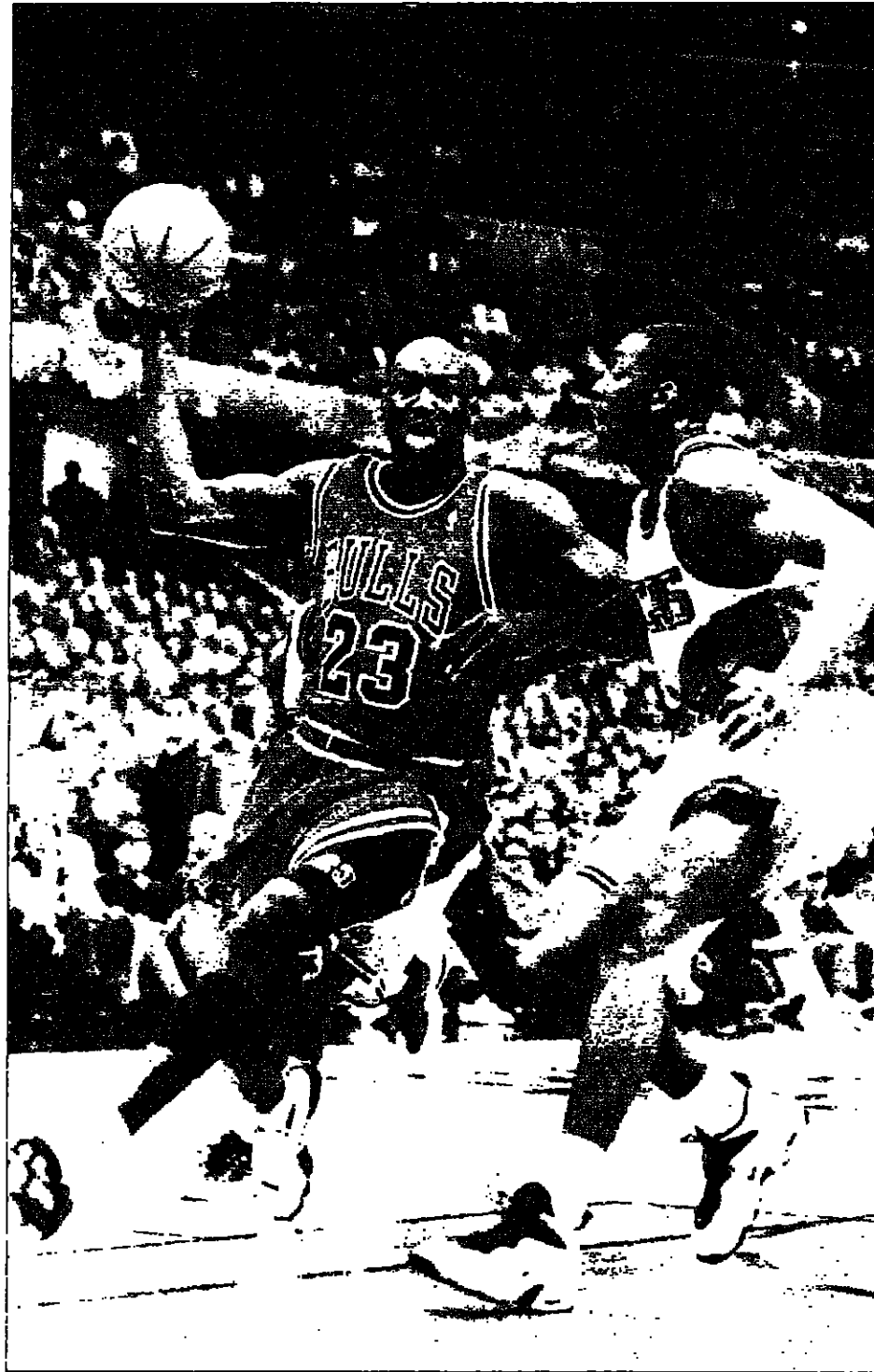
Johansson won through to the final after defeating Australia's Sandon Stolle 7-6 (8/6), 7-5.

"I think I have a good chance against Kenneth if I can serve and return as well as I did today," said Johansson.

Cavaliers ending Bulls' winning streak

CLEVELAND (AP) — Brevin Knight had a career-high 22 points, five steals and four assists as the Cleveland Cavaliers ended Chicago's 13-game winning streak Thursday night with a 91-85 victory over the Bulls.

Michael Jordan, whose buzzer-beating shots knocked Cleveland out of the playoffs in 1989 and 1993, scored 29 points but only 11 came after the first quarter. Jordan didn't make a field goal in the fourth period as the Bulls missed a chance to clinch the best record in the Eastern Conference.



Michael Jordan (L) of the Chicago Bulls makes his move around Wesley Person of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the first quarter of their game at Gund Arena (Reuters photo)

Shawn Kemp had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Cavs, while Dennis Rodman grabbed 20 rebounds for the Bulls.

• **Pistons 102, Wizards 83:** In Washington, amid boos and catcalls, the beleaguered Wizards were routed by a Detroit Pistons team that had lost its previous seven games and been eliminated from the playoff race.

The distraction caused by a sexual assault complaint filed this week against Washington stars Chris Webber and Juwan Howard, combined with the loss of NBA assists leader Rod Strickland, left the Wizards with little fight for a game they needed to win to maintain realistic hope for a playoff berth.

The loss dropped the Wizards 2 1/2 games behind the eighth-place New Jersey Nets and a full game behind ninth-place Orlando in the Eastern Conference.

• **Pacers 105, Hawks 102, OT:** In Atlanta, Reggie Miller hit an off-balance 3-pointer with 1.3 seconds left to force overtime and the Indiana Pacers never trailed in the extra period.

Miller, who finished with 19 points, opened the overtime with another 3-pointer, giving the Pacers a lead they held until Dikembe Mutombo hit a short hook to tie it at 100 with 2:25 to play.

Jalen Rose then made a wide open 3-pointer from the right corner to put Indiana ahead to stay as the Pacers handed the Hawks only their second setback in seven overtime games this year.

Chris Mullin and Antonio Davis each scored 19 points for the Pacers.

• **SuperSonics 103, Mavericks 101:** In Dallas, Gary Payton scored seven of his 28 points during a key fourth-quarter run as Seattle edged Dallas to give coach George Karl his 500th career victory.

Detlef Schrempf added five of his 22 points during

the 15-6 fourth-quarter spurt to help the Sonics move within a half-game of the Utah Jazz for the best record in the Western Conference.

The Mavericks had a chance to tie or win in the closing seconds, but Michael Finley's 3-pointer from the left corner rimmed out at the buzzer.

• **Nuggets 128, Kings 103:** In Denver, the Nuggets won their 10th game of the season to avoid any chance of finishing with the worst record in NBA history.

The Nuggets (10-67) now have one more victory than the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers, who went 9-73.

Johnny Newman came off the bench to score 35 points for Denver, which has five games remaining.

LaPhonso Ellis had 36

points and 15 rebounds, and Cory Alexander added 23 points and 11 assists for the Nuggets.

The win drew a standing ovation from the crowd of 10,959, which has suffered through the worst season in franchise history.

• **Rockets 93, Warriors 89:** In Oakland, California, Mario Elie scored 22 points and Clyde Drexler added 19 as the Houston Rockets took control in the third quarter to defeat the Golden State Warriors.

Drexler had nine points as the Rockets, who have won 17 of their last 20 games against Golden State, outscored the Warriors 29-18 in the third period to turn a four-point halftime deficit into a seven-point lead.

The Rockets, who have won two straight after los-

ing six in a row, have won their last five games at Golden State.

• **Trail Blazers 99, Clippers 95:** In Los Angeles, Rasheed Wallace scored six straight points late in the game as the Portland Trail Blazers rallied to beat the Los Angeles Clippers.

With the Trail Blazers down 88-85 and 3 1/2 minutes remaining, Wallace scored the next three baskets to put Portland up by three with less than two minutes left.

The Trail Blazers, who have beaten the Clippers seven straight times, sealed the win with free throws in the closing moments.

Brian Grant had 25 points and 13 rebounds for Portland.

No transfer deal for Del Piero

MILAN (AFP) — Juventus' star striker Alessandro Del Piero dismissed British reports of a move to the English Premiership on Friday, saying they were pure fiction.

The rumour mill swung into action earlier this week when the champions' 29-goal hero went to London on business, and met up with former teammate Gianluca Vialli, now player-coach of Chelsea.

But Del Piero said: "Absolutely nothing happened in London, apart from having dinner with Luca and recording a children's programme for Walt Disney."

"Everything that came out in the papers — in terms of my contract, what I might be asking from Juventus and any offers from other clubs, like Chelsea for example — are all false."

"My image and my sense of professionalism mustn't be tainted in this way. If I've got something to say to Juventus I'll do it myself, face to face, and not via the press."

Del Piero's existing contract with the Italian league leaders expires in 2000, but a new one is due to be negotiated in the weeks ahead.

He admitted telling British reporters, as he has been telling Italian ones for the past two years, that "No-one is indispensable to Juventus, there's no-one who cannot be sold."

Juventus have a habit of selling star players, having released Vialli, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Roberto Baggio in recent years.

However, there is a key difference between them and Del Piero. Rightly or wrongly, Juventus suspected that the careers of the first three were all on the way down — while Del Piero's is clearly on the way up.

Baggio spent 1994-95 struggling in vain to recover physically and mentally from the 1994 World Cup finals, and the two sides failed to agree a new deal. He subsequently only scored 12 goals in two years at AC Milan.

And in the summer of 1996, Middlesbrough's £7.5 million offer for Ravanelli was far above his market value in Italy, while Vialli turned 32 before playing his first game for Chelsea.

Del Piero, at 23, is having his best season ever with Juventus, and has manured into a true leader, on and off the pitch.



Canadian Williams-Renault Formula One driver Jacques Villeneuve walks off holding a birthday cake and with his face still covered with cake from his birthday party at the Oscar Galvez race track in Buenos Aires. Villeneuve, who is the current Formula One World Champion, turned 27 years old (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1' Yusra & Ilham Shahin ... in DANTELLA (ARABIC) Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA 2' Morgan Freeman & Ashley Judd ... in KISS THE GIRLS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA The biggest cinema production TITANIC Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	CONCORD ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI - KAMANANA Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 11:00, 2:00, 5:15, 8:30, 12:00	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 STARTING APRIL 6TH Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kurdi and the group at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
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Worl Sports

Cairo tea

By Roufan Nabhas

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A local football team, which was crowned champion after beating Jordan's first team, 12-0 in the Four Nations Rugby Championship held at Al Hussein Sports Club.

Jordan finished the first half with a 12-0 lead and just after the first half, the Jordanians were unbeatable. The second half was a rout. Jordan's attack was particularly strong in the second half.

We fought bravely in the first half but we were many chances to attack, such as Miss Scamman's kick, which Miss Scamman missed.

It was a matter of when Jordanians would win under the Jordanian flag, for their football team, who missed the chance to win the Prince Abdullah Trophy.

The weekend event inaugurated the new grounds, which were donated to the Jordan Rugby Football Club (JRFC) by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hashim.

HRH Prince Hashim presented the winning team with the Prince Abdullah Trophy, expressing hope to see more local parties.

Euro Juventus Real

THIS (AFP) — Italian champions Juventus enter the final stage of Serie A season in this weekend's match at Marcellino Luppi stadium in Turin.

pre-empting they have a chance to clinch the title.

The Spanish counter-attack Real Madrid de porting to win the title.

in their second place behind Barcelona.

In Germany, Bayern Munich beat city rivals HSV 1-0 on Monday.

the chance of cutting Bayern's lead to one goal.

Bayern's lead to one goal.

the French Cup enters the semi-finals.

Juventus have an easy task on paper against a Fiorentina side struggling to avoid relegation at the end of the season.

Buyed up by last Sunday's 1-0 win over Lazio, which almost certainly made the Serie A title a foregone conclusion, Juventus will be still strength for the game in Turin.

Lippi said: "We can only gauge the importance of beating Lazio after Sunday's game. Everyone says the title is decided in the final weekend games among the top clubs, but I think it's the supposedly easy matches."

The nearly 75,000 fans who came by drawing with Napoli to Lazio and Inter by drawing with Fiorentina and Bologna.

Real Madrid's victory against Bayern will only count for a lot if we win against Fiorentina.

Alexandro Del Piero and Filippo "Pippo" Inzaghi will lead the pack hoping to add to their 83 goals this season, although there may also be room for Uruguayan Matias Lusa.

Trying to stop them will be the old hand in the Serie A, Piacenza defender Pietro Vierchowod, who scored 39 this week and who was well into his second season as a professional on the day Zlatanovic was born.

In Spain Real Madrid's vain hopes of

NBA	102	Washington
Atlanta	105	Atlanta
Cleveland	91	Chicago
Seattle	103	Dallas
Denver	128	Sacramento
Phoenix	93	Golden State
Portland	99	LA Clippers
American League		
Texas	11	White Sox
Baltimore	2	Kansas City
Minnesota	13	Toronto
Tempe Bay at Detroit		Postponed
National League		
Atlanta	4	Pittsburgh
San Diego	8	Ny Mets
Los Angeles	6	Cincinnati
Montreal	6	Milwaukee

Cairo team wins 4-nation Amman rugby tournament

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Cairo rugby team were crowned champions after beating Jordan's first team 12-6 in the Four-Nation Rugby Championship held at Al Hussein Sports City.

Jordan battled the heat and dust and led the first half 6-0 but Cairo's unbeatable attacks were back in full power in the second half.

Jordan concentrated more on defence and rarely had the chance to attack especially in the second half.

"We fought bravely in the first half but we lost so many chances to attack," coach Mike Sedman told the Jordan Times.

It was a match to watch as Jordanian fans, sweating under the blazing sun, cheered for their favorite team who missed the chance to win the Prince Abdullah Trophy.

The weekend event inaugurates the new grounds which were donated to the Jordan Rugby Football Club (JRFC) by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

HRH Prince Ra'd presented the winning team with the Prince Abdullah Trophy, expressing hope to see more local partici-

pants in the coming events.

HRH Prince Abdullah had attended the training sessions but did not take part in the matches.

The JRFC hosted teams from Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan over the weekend.

Cairo reached the finals after beating Episkopi Eagles 24-7 and Cyprus Stags 64-3.

Jordan First team overcame Beirut 27-0 and the Jordan Falcons 64-0.

Rugby is not totally new on the Kingdom's sports scene. Prior to the Gulf war there was a rugby club in Jordan made up of expatriates and one Jordanian. That group sent a team to the Dubai Sevens in 1989. The next

time a team from Jordan was to participate in the same tournament was in 1996.

Now Jordan has two teams half of which are Jordanians. The idea was resurrected in 1994 through an advertisement in the Jordan Times by Martin Cronin, then second secretary at the British embassy in Amman.

The advertisement did its job and more Jordanians became part of this team.

The team was regrouped and started training in mid-1996 on a small plot of grassy land within the British embassy grounds.

Fans were able to enjoy

a spectacle of a parachute drop Friday prior to the trophy final.

Like Jordan, Cyprus had two teams entered in the event. Jordan Falcons were out in the two-day event after losing their matches against Jordan First team and Beirut.

Each team consisted of 15 players — 8 forwards and seven backs.

In rugby any player can score and their objectives are just to win possession of the ball. This is done in "scrums" (when play has stopped and they bind together) "line outs" (when the ball is thrown in from the side) or in "rucks" and "mauls" (when they bind together as lay in running).

Thursday's matches

Beirut v Cairo	7-24
Beirut v Jordan	27-0
Cyprus Stags v Episkopi Eagles	6-32
Cyprus Stags v Jordan	0-64
Cyprus Stags v Cyprus Falcons	64-3
Cyprus Stags v Cyprus Falcons	39-7

Friday's matches April 10

Beirut v Cyprus Stags	0-24
Beirut v Jordan	27-0
Beirut v Jordan	32-20
Beirut v Jordan	12-6

for the Prince Abdullah Trophy final

European Soccer Preview Juventus enter final straight while Real look to consolidate

PARIS (AFP) — Italian champions Juventus enter the final straight of their Serie A season this weekend with coach Marcello Lippi calling on them to give everything they have while their Spanish counterparts Real Madrid desperately seek to consolidate their second place behind Barcelona.

In Germany Bayern Munich host lowly city rivals TSV 1860 Munich with the chance of cutting leaders Kaiserslautern's lead to just one point while in France the league takes a rest as the French Cup enters the semi-final stage.

Juventus have an easy tie on paper against a Piacenza side struggling, as ever, to beat relegation at the end of the season.

Buoyed up by last Sunday's 1-0 victory over Lazio, which almost certainly made the Serie A title a two-horse race with Inter Milan, Juventus will be at full strength for the game in Turin.

Lippi said: "We can only gauge the importance of beating Lazio after Saturday's game. Everyone says the title is decided in the head-to-head games among the top clubs, but I think it's in the supposedly easy matches."

"We nearly jeopardised our whole season by drawing with Napoli, Lazio did the same by drawing with Fiorentina and Inter by losing at home to Bari and Bologna. Beating Lazio will only count for a lot if we also beat Piacenza."

Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo "Super Pippo" Inzaghi will lead the attack, hoping to add to their 53-goal total this season, although there may also be room for Uruguayan Marcelo Zalayeta.

Trying to stop them will be the oldest man in the Serie A, Piacenza defender Pietro Vierchowod, who turned 39 this week and who was well into his second season as a professional on the day Zalayeta was born.

In Spain Real Madrid's vain hopes of

overhauling Barcelona in the championship all but disappeared on Tuesday when the Catalan side used their game in hand to beat Real Betis 2-0 and move 11 points clear of last season's champions.

Real must now hope to qualify for next season's Champions League by either winning this season's European Cup or retaining their second place in the league.

They face a difficult trip to fifth placed Celta Vigo on Saturday and look likely to be without the injured duo of Yugoslav striker Predrag Mijatovic and young Spanish star Fernando Morientes — Croat Davor Suker and Emilio Amavisca will fill in.

Celta, who have been the surprise package of the title race this season, will be without their influential Brazilian World Cup winning midfielder star Mazinho, who scored a brilliant goal in his side's 3-1 win over Barcelona a fortnight ago.

Barcelona, who have come back from a hugely disappointing Champions League campaign to be within two or three games of sealing the title, travel to modest Merida.

Bayern Munich have everything to play for after Kaiserslautern dropped another two points against Borussia Dortmund on Thursday evening.

Five games are left to play and Kaiserslautern's lead has melted to four points after failing to win their last seven matches — although the leaders will have what could prove to be a vital game in hand after the Munich derby.

All of Munich is buzzing although 1860 last beat Bayern 21 years ago. Even so, these Bavarian derbies are always passionate affairs and a highlight of Munich's football calendar.

"The city is split down the middle between red and blue. I hardly know anyone who doesn't care about this game," Bayern's Mehmet Scholl said.

As Bayern gun for the title 1860, however, will be happy if they can simply scrape through for another season of football in Germany's top division.

"It doesn't have to be a good game, just a win," Bayern manager Uli Hoeness said.

"We want the title and plan to cause Kaiserslautern a lot of trouble," he added.

Despite their outward confidence Bayern will be without four key players Thomas Helmer, Mario Basler, Brazilian striker Giovane Elber and Alexander Zickler because of injury.

The French Cup semi-finals are split between Saturday and Sunday as first double chasing Lens host UEFA Cup hopefuls Lyon and Paris Saint Germain, who captured the League Cup last Saturday, host last year's beaten finalists Guingamp.

Lens, who lead Metz by two points in the title race, will be at almost full strength as they have only a doubt over their Czech Republic star Vladimir Smicer who picked up an injury in Tuesday's 3-0 win over Rennes.

Lyon, who will leave over former French international wing Reynald Pedros for the second successive match, will definitely be without playmaker Philippe Violeau and he is likely to be replaced by Polish international sweeper Jacek Bak.

Paris, who have recovered some of their early season poise and form, must wait on Brazilian inspiration Rai, who will wait until Friday before declaring whether he has recovered from an ankle injury he picked up in the League Cup final.

Guingamp, who face a tough battle against relegation, will hope that influential Romanian World Cup veteran George Mihaili recovers from a left ankle injury if they are to try and make it two French Cup finals in a row.

Sri Lanka bans Asia's fastest woman over drug scandal

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's star athlete and Asia's fastest woman, Susanthika Jayasinghe, 20, was suspended Friday after testing positive a second time for performance enhancing drugs, officials said.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) told the local Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) that Jayasinghe's second urine "B" sample taken last month was found to contain traces of Nandrolone, a banned steroid.

The IAAF also rejected an explanation by the runner after her first sample, taken during a random off season testing of athletes training for the Sydney 2000 Olympic games, also tested positive last month.

"Her explanation was not accepted by the IAAF and we have therefore decided to temporarily suspend her pending an official inquiry," Sri Lanka's AAA Secretary Rohan Amarasinghe said.

He did not say what the international athletic governing body's reaction was to calls by Susanthika Jayasinghe as well as local authorities for a fresh dope test.

"According to international rules, we are forced to accept that she has used banned drugs," Amarasinghe said.

The 200m runner-up at last year's world championships claimed the samples taken last month had not been properly sealed and she accused sports

ministry officials of tampering with them.

Jayasinghe was not immediately available for comment, but her husband, Dhammika, said they were yet to be informed of the ban. "Of course this means that she will not be able to go to China for a commercial 'world's fastest woman' race next month," he said. Last week, Jayasinghe said Sri Lankan sports ministry officials may have tampered with her failed drug test and expressed her willingness to present herself for any further tests.

"I don't have a fountain of Nandrolone in my body," the 20-year-old told a press conference at her Colombo apartment last week. "I showed ministry doctors that the urine containers were not sealed and anyone could have opened them."

Jayasinghe said officials, whom she has previously accused of sexual harassment, may have tampered with the sample to discredit her.

"My conscience is clear. The only drugs I have taken are Disprin, Panadol and the pill as a contraceptive," Jayasinghe said. Disprin and Panadol are headache relievers.

"I am willing to subject not only my urine but blood or any part of me to an international body."

Jayasinghe missed training for three months after winning silver at the world championships last year following earlier accusations against the

sports ministry.

The sprinter's mother accused a top politician of forcibly having sex with Jayasinghe and threatening her unless she divorced her husband.

"I am told that the lab in Australia got my urine sample in a tamper proof container and well sealed but when I gave the sample I showed ministry doctors that the two bottles for sample 'A' and 'B' could be opened, (without) leaving any trace of tampering," Jayasinghe said.

Jayasinghe failed tests in 1994 and 1996, which also found Nandrolone. She was cleared after a second test and her explanation that she had taken medicine to delay menstruation.

Jayasinghe is the best athlete to come out of South Asia and favourite for a gold medal at this year's Asian Games. She was among five potential Sri Lankan Olympic athletes given a drugs test last month. The other four tested negative.

"I can't read, write or understand English. So I don't know what was given to me by my doctors. But when I was tested in Athens in August it was negative," she said.

She resumed training three months after the world championships last August after assurances that she would be left alone by ministry officials.

San Francisco Giants center fielder Darryl Hamilton (R) dives back to first base ahead of the tag by Houston Astros first basemen Jeff Bagwell (L) on a pick-off attempt in the first inning in San Francisco (Reuters photo)



Frenchman exposes Becker's lack of match practice

CHENNAI, India (AFP) — Boris Becker's lack of matchplay now that he is semi-retired was cruelly exposed in the second round of the ATP tournament here on Thursday where he was humbled 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 by little-known Frenchman Gerard Solves.

The 30-year-old German has now failed to advance beyond the second round in any of the three tournaments he has played this year.

Top seeded Patrick Rafter of Australia joined Solves in the quarter-finals with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Ivo Heuberger of Switzerland, while second seeded Australian Todd Woodbridge struggled for the second straight day before overcoming Italy's Cristiano Caratti 6-0, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2.

Solves, who has a world ranking of 155, has enjoyed only modest success and spends most of his career on the lowly Challenger circuit.

But he was able to take advantage of a subdued Becker performance, consistently passing him at the net or punishing him with a succession of winning returns.

"I give him total credit," Becker said.

"He went for his shots when it mattered. He wasn't afraid to hit the ball and at moments came up with shots that were incredible, and I became slow as the match went on," he added.

Playing only a limited schedule, Becker knows he cannot hope to offer the same challenge as players committed to a full-time career. But he denied that was the reason behind his shock defeat.

"It's part of sports that you lose sometimes, and even when I played full-time I had very bad matches,"



Boris Becker

Becker said.

"I'm not saying I played a bad match — for a set-and-a-half I played very good. But if you go out there and run around in weather like that you'll understand where I'm coming from."

"I've been here for two days and it is very difficult to get used to the conditions. I tried everything I had but I couldn't get air. All the air that I was breathing was hot. It was like a sauna."

Woodbridge appeared to be on his way to an easy win over Caratti as he led by a set and 3-1. But his opponent managed to fight his way back into the match, and the frustrated Australian

found his back against the wall when Caratti broke to lead 5-4.

Woodbridge managed to hold him off and then earned a match point at 6-5, but Caratti levelled the match in the tiebreak. In the final set, Woodbridge called for the trainer fearing that he might be developing cramps, but he was able to continue and claim victory.

Although he has been stretched in both his matches this week, Woodbridge is able to see a positive side to his performances.

"It concerns me a little bit," said Woodbridge, who drank eight litres of water to combat the humidity.

"I'm way off my best, but

I've really scraped through well and for me that's good. Mentally I've really played hard, and that's a good sign for me, to be really digging and getting through tough situations," he added.

Rafter, with less matches than usual under his belt this year because of injury, admitted he is lacking a little confidence. But he was never in trouble against Heuberger.

"He gave me a lot more rhythm and it was easier to play than my first match. I definitely hit the ball better," the U.S. Open champion said.

"And I love the atmosphere here. The crowd are really boisterous. They're like a cricket crowd, actually," he added.

Leander Paes volleyed superbly to take the opening set from sixth seeded Frenchman Jerome Golmard, but failed to maintain the pressure as the Frenchman rallied in the second.

But at 2-1 in the final set Golmard collapsed with cramps, and although he continued after treatment he dropped his serve, collapsed again in the next game, and surrendered the match with the Indian leading 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 3-1.

In other matches, third seed Mark Woodforde of Australia progressed with a comfortable 6-4, 6-2 victory over Rainer Schuttler of Germany, seventh seed Arnaud Clement of France was beaten 6-3, 6-2 by Germany's Lars Burgsmuller, defending champion and fifth seed Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden eased past France's Olivier Delaire 7-5, 6-3, and eighth seeded Romanian Andrei Pavel beat Allen Belobrajdic of Australia 6-4, 6-0.

SCOREBOARD

St Louis	7	Colorado	5
Los Angeles	7	Arizona	2
Houston	3	San Francisco	1
Bundesliga			
Kaiserslautern	1	Borussia Dortmund	1
VfB Bochum	1	Hansa Rostock	3
Amelia Island WTA Tour			
Amanda Cozzari (Rta x2) bt Magui Serra (Spa)			
6-3, 6-3			
(vs Mayoli (Gbr) bt Barbara Rittner (Ger)			
6-3, 6-3			
(7/5)			
Mary Pierce (USA) bt Catalina Cristea (Rom)			
6-1, 6-2			
Concepcion Martinez (Spa x6) bt Anne Miller (USA)			
6-4, 6-3			
Jennifer Capriati (USA) bt Barbara Schett (Aut)			
6-2, 6-3			

